

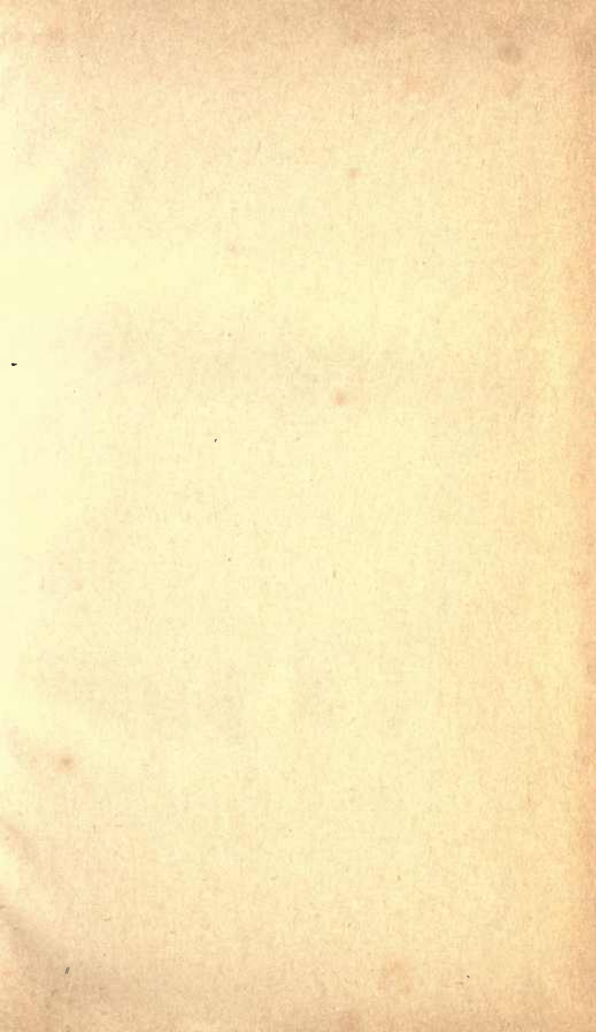






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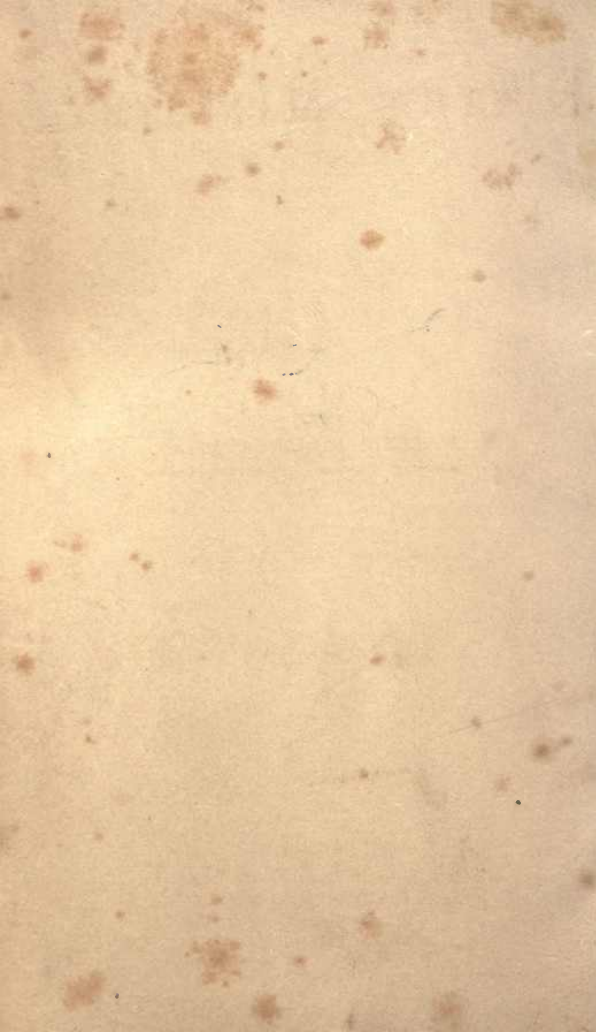
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EDITH'S MINISTRY.

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EDITH'S MINISTRY.

CHAPTER I.

THE CLIFFORD FAMILY.



HE wind whistled shrilly around a noble mansion, which stood proudly upon a high eminence on the North River. It had been called Ravenswood, after the family name of Mrs. Clifford, and had belonged for many years to the old estate.

From the front piazza there was a commanding view of the beautiful Hudson, and all around, the scenery was highly picturesque and romantic; rolling hills and noble forests, dotted over with tasteful residences, presented a picture of exceeding beauty. In summer, the noble river was one of the most attractive features in the landscape, but now, its ice-bound surface only spoke of the presence of a grim jailer, shutting in a cheerless prison, its dancing waters.

Our story opens in the winter, when the trees are stripped of all their luxuriant foliage.

The keen wind swept around the lofty portico, which stretched across the front and wings of the house, wailing first in low sighs, then in prolonged blasts, cracking the dry boughs, and howling a wintry dirge over the desolation which it had itself created.

Snow had fallen for several weeks, and the ground was covered with a hard, frozen surface, cracking beneath the feet of the traveller.

It was night; the large bay-window of the south wing was brilliantly lighted, and within was seated a lovely family group, gathered in the library just after their evening meal. The room was large and airy, the walls were furnished with walnut book-cases; in the centre stood a large study-table, lighted by a bright lamp with several branches. Comfortable chairs of various kinds were scattered around; two couches with pillows, covered with crimson moreen, stood, one in the large bay-window, and the other on the side of the room. Fine pictures, and the busts of distinguished persons adorned the walls, and heavy crimson curtains shaded the windows, and served to shut out the wintry blasts. In a large parlor-grate blazed a fire of bituminous coal, and the room exhibited an appearance of wealth and comfort.

In a comfortable arm-chair, on one side of the fire, was seated Mr. Clifford, a fine, noble-looking man, in the prime of life; by his side, on a lower chair, reposed the lovely mother of the family. She was a small, delicate-looking woman, so fair and ethereal in her appearance, as always to remind one of the frailty of human life. Her soft blue eyes and transparent complexion, with a profusion of light, flaxen hair, would have indicated weakness of character; unless a more observing glance had been directed to the arched nostrils, and beautifully curved mouth, where sweetness, mingled with firmness, sat enthroned. Her figure, though small, was graceful; but there was a languor in her movements, a sad sweetness in her smile, and a faltering in her step, that spoke of failing strength, and a feeble hold on life.

At the table sat Frank, the only son, a boy of sixteen, a handsome youth, with a profusion of curling dark hair, and flashing eyes, brimful of the spirit of mischief.

Margaret, or Madge, as we shall call her, a girl of fourteen,

sat in a corner, in a little chair, near the fire, with a large book on her lap, which she seemed to be almost devouring. She was small, thin, and awkward; her complexion swarthy, her features out of proportion, especially her nose, which was aquiline, and very large; her mouth was expressive, but not beautiful, but her eyes, (when you could get a glimpse of them,) were so remarkable, that once seen, they could never be forgotten; they were so brilliant and variable in their expression, and at times so luminous, that they seemed almost to emit light; but so very eccentric and shy was this little girl, that she seldom raised her eyes long enough for you to see their beauty, so generally veiled under the long, dark eye-lashes.

Books were her constant delight; so much was she devoted to them, that frequently they were hidden from her to compel her to take the exercise which her health demanded. Childish ones did not satisfy her; the great poets fascinated her completely, and, young as she was, even Shakespeare was understood and appreciated.

The eldest daughter, Edith, a girl of seventeen, was seated on a couch in the bay-window, with her arm encircling the waist of her governess, whom she dearly loved; and well she deserved her affection, for Miss Arnold was no common person. She was about thirty years old, commanding in her appearance, and possessed of rare qualifications as a teacher.

Edith Clifford was a lovely girl, tall and graceful, with a face beaming with feeling and intelligence; her complexion was a pale, clear brunette, and a wealth of glossy raven hair hung around her face and shoulders in waving ringlets. Her beauty was chiefly in the lofty and bright expression of her face; not in the mere skin or in the moulding of her features. She had naturally a proud spirit, but a warm and generous heart, and talents of a high order.

The third daughter, Blanche, was beautiful as a poet's dream; the fourth, Adele, a twin, an arch, mischievous little sprite, full of fun and frolic; the next, Lilly, a timid, sensi-

tive little creature ; and the pet of the family, Emily, a babe, not yet out of her mother's arms. This family group was gathered, as was their custom, in the library, early in the evening, for papa delighted to have his whole family together at that hour.

The party at the table was busily employed in a game ; Emily sat on her papa's lap, playing with his hair, patting his cheek, and caressing him tenderly.

Edith, sitting near the window, called Miss Arnold's attention to the beauty of the winter sky, saying, "How grand the constellations are to-night ! Orion is brilliant as a band of diamonds, and the Great Bear, how splendid he appears ! What are those, Miss Arnold, in the shape of an A ?" "That is the constellation of the Pleiades ; how much more beautiful they are in the winter !"

As they were conversing, they observed two figures moving rapidly up the avenue that led to the house ; they were male and female, and as they drew nearer, the lad darted out of the path, and ran across the grounds to the window, where, knocking sportively, Edith recognized Gerald Fortescue, and his sister Josephine. In a minute more they entered the room, and were warmly greeted by the party in the library.

They were near neighbors, who resided at Oak Hall. Josephine, the elder, was a fine-looking girl, with rather a brusque, independent bearing, that was almost masculine. Gerald, aged about nineteen, was a pale, intelligent-looking youth, with waving brown hair, shading a lofty forehead ; and eyes with a thoughtful, dreamy expression. He seemed to look up to his sister with great admiration and reverence.

They had not been long seated, when the bell rang for evening worship, and Mrs. Clifford arose and led the way to her own sitting-room, followed by all but her husband. He was a man of the world, and, though tenderly attached to his lovely wife, thought her notions too strict and puritanical, therefore, he took no interest in these services.

Mrs. Clifford was a devoted Christian, and true to her views

of duty, walked straight forward in her humble path of piety and devotedness to God. It was a trial, in the presence of her servants and children, thus silently to reprove her husband; but her duty to God demanded it, and she was obedient.

In her room stood a parlor organ. Miss Arnold played delightfully on the instrument, and Mrs. Clifford, who had a sweet voice, led the singing. Solemnly she read a portion of the Scriptures, and then implored, in earnest, heartfelt prayer, the blessing of God upon her household, not forgetting the guests who were present with them on that occasion.

Gerald was touched by the sweet tones of intercession; but Josephine remained seated, with rather a contemptuous expression upon her face. She prided herself much upon her noble intellect, forgetting who had bestowed the gift, and instead of using her talents in the service of God, and bowing her will to his, she had struck out a path for herself, and was walking in the light of her own understanding, independent of God's revealed will. In her college life (for she had graduated at a female institution), she had unfortunately came in contact with strong-minded women, and finding their foolish boasts of independence consonant with her notions of woman's rights, she had thrown aside the gentle charms of womanhood, and had fully imbibed the irreligious spirit of those misguided women. Consequently, this sweet evening service she regarded as fanatical and pharisaical, and sat during the exercises, while others knelt, to show her want of respect for their observances. After the services, they all returned to the library, save little Emily, who was dismissed, with a mother's sweet kiss, to her nightly slumbers.

Gerald seated himself near Edith, and entertained her with a book of beautiful engravings, which he had brought over; she seemed delighted with the book, and frequently called Miss Arnold to admire the lovely pictures.

Frank amused himself with teasing his sister Madge (a remarkably sensitive child), who exhibited much impatience

under the infliction. Blanche, Adele, and Lilly were deeply interested in cutting out some winter garments for their dolls. Before separating, all, excepting Madge, joined in several merry games of real sport, but none could persuade the wayward child to join them.

"Let her alone," said Frank, thoughtlessly, "she is a poor little mope, always pouting and grum." Madge raised her eyes for a minute, and they flashed fire at her thoughtless brother, as she said: "I don't think I should ever like to play with you, Frank, for you do nothing but pull my nose, and twitch my hair; you never do so with Blanche and Adele."

"Go off to your books, Madge, it is all that you are good for," and the poor little thing turned her head away to hide the tear that she was too proud to show.

She stole softly around to her mother, and whispered, "Mamma, may I go to bed? I do not feel very well."

"Go, my child; and don't forget to pray," was the affectionate reply.

When she retired, she soliloquized thus in the silence of her room. "I wonder if anybody will ever love me? they all love Blanche and Adele, but they are beautiful, and I am ugly; I shall never be pretty, and I can't be good, even if I try; I find my bad temper leading me off, even when I feel my heart bursting for the want of somebody to love me; I try to hide it, and say cross and wicked things, when I don't feel all that I say. Oh! dear! oh, dear! what shall I do? mamma tells me to pray; but do I pray? or do I only repeat words? I am afraid that is all; and yet I can't go to bed without repeating my prayers." Ere retiring, from the force of habit, Madge knelt by her bedside, and repeated her form of prayer, but it gave no relief, for the heart was not in the service. She lay awake for a long time, and at last cried herself to sleep, determined that she would not be any better, and that no one should know what she suffered.

About nine o'clock, the party in the library separated; the winter moon was shining over the landscape, and as the

young people stood on the piazza, Gerald turned to Edith, and said: "I am going to college, soon; how I shall miss you; will you ever think of your brother Gerald?"

"Yes, indeed, Gerald; in our pleasant walks and rides, in our excursions on the river, everywhere we shall miss you."

"Edith, I must have a lock of your hair; will you give it to me before I go?"

"You shall have it, Gerald; and what shall I have of yours?"

"You shall have my dog, Bruno. I think that you will take good care of him for my sake, won't you, Edith?"

"Gladly, Gerald; that will be delightful."

"I am going out to ride to-morrow, Edith, before breakfast; will you accompany me? or would you think it too cold?"

"No, indeed, Gerald, I am used to the wind of our bleak hills; and if mamma will permit me, I will be ready."

"Good-night, Edith; I shall call for you."

This conversation took place ere they parted, and Edith turned back into the house, saddened by the thought of soon losing the society of Gerald Fortescue, for they had passed most of their lives in the closest bonds of childish intimacy.

Frank was a dear affectionate brother, but such a tease, that it was with peculiar feelings of relief, that Edith could always look to Gerald for protection, when her brother was in his mischievous moods.

Gerald was a peculiarly interesting character, remarkably warm-hearted and generous; his nature was cast in one of the finest moulds of promising boyhood. Not so strong as Edith, he looked to her often for advice and sympathy, when few others understood him. The attachment which sprang up between these young persons was remarkably pure and tender, and the thought of parting was very painful to each young heart.

Gerald's education had hitherto been conducted at home, under the care of a tutor, with Frank for his companion,

after he had passed from the care of a governess, but it was now deemed expedient to send him to college, and his sensitive nature shrank from the trial of leaving those he loved.

When Edith spoke of the ride to her mamma, her consent was freely given, and Edith was up long before the breakfast hour, ready for her ride. Her favorite pony, Lady Jane, was standing at the front door, impatiently champing her bit, in the hands of a groom, and Edith, in her dark riding dress, was seated on the piazza, looking eagerly down the avenue for her companion. In a few minutes, Gerald, mounted on a fine horse, attended by his dog, Bruno, made his appearance; as soon as he saw the young girl, he lifted his cap, and she welcomed his approach by a graceful wave of her little riding whip.

Edith had been so long in the country, and been so accustomed to exercise out of doors, that she was not afraid of a winter ride; and warmly clad, she mounted her pony in great glee, and off they scampered, Bruno barking and capering around them in gambols of delight.

"Edith, what shall I do without you, when I go to college? we have passed all our lives together, and when I get among a parcel of rough boys, I shall miss my gentle sister."

"You must be careful, Gerald, of your associates, have nothing to do with dissipated or idle companions; you have never been away from home, and I suppose that you have no idea what you may have to meet with in college life."

"You will often see my sister, Edith; I hope that you will love her for my sake."

"I cannot be deceitful, Gerald, but indeed thus far I am afraid of Josephine, she has such a way of commanding every one, and has such strange notions about women; and then she says such dreadful things about ministers, that really, Gerald, I cannot help feeling more of fear than love for her."

"That is all true, Edith, but still she is my sister, and certainly has great talents."

"I know it, Gerald, but the other evening when she was

speaking against our dear good pastor, I could scarcely refrain from speaking, I felt so indignant."

"I was wounded also, Edith, for how can I ever forget dear kind Mr. Berkely, he has been such a faithful friend to me; he has given me a letter to the Rev. Mr. Perkins, who is one of the faculty of our college."

"You will seek his friendship, dear Gerald, and go to him when you need Christian counsel."

Thus they continued to beguile the time, and at the end of an hour returned, much exhilarated by their morning ride.

Edith entered the breakfast-room glowing with health, and running up to her mother, kissed her affectionately, and exchanged the morning salutations with each of the family; after morning prayer, the party separated, and prepared for their daily routine of duty.

Gerald spent as much of his time as he could spare with his friends. At length the time arrived for his departure. Ere leaving, he visited all his favorite haunts, gave charges to old Uncle Ben, a family servant, concerning all his pets, —his pigeons, his rabbits, and his pony, Lion, were all remembered.

On the night before his departure, he brought over his dog, Bruno, and said to him: "Now, Bruno, here is your new mistress, you must be a good dog to Miss Edith; and now, Edith, where is the precious curl?"

True to her promise, she had cut a beautiful lock from her head, tied it with a ribbon, folded in a piece of paper, and handed it to Gerald.

"Edith, will you answer my letter, if I write to you?"

"I will, with mamma's permission."

"I shall often need your kind sympathy, and shall see your dark eyes bent on me with all your old sisterly affection; how often I shall long for their approving glance! Good-bye, Edith."

"Farewell, Gerald; be industrious, faithful, studious; the time will pass away rapidly, if you keep busy; and you will soon be with us again."

As he turned away, Edith saw a tear glistening in his eye, and she prayed for God to bless her youthful companion.

Edith was very lonely for some time, but with the hopefulness of youth, she began to count the days which would intervene before Gerald would return; and though she missed him from all her accustomed haunts, she was too busy with her studies to allow the time to hang heavily. Bruno was her constant companion; in all her rides and walks his presence was indispensable, and nothing could exceed his joy, when he heard his young mistress calling him to her side.

She heard constantly from Gerald, he made her the confidant of all his perplexities, the partaker of all his success, and the sympathizer in all his troubles. His letters were always shown to her mother, who saw nothing in them but kind, brotherly love on his part, and on Edith's the sweet return of a sister's pure affection. Sometimes, Mrs. Clifford added a postscript, for she pitied the sensitive boy, so early deprived of a mother's love, and finding nothing congenial or womanly in his strong-minded, masculine sister, Josephine.

At the close of the winter, Edith received the following:

"DEAR EDITH: As there will be a short vacation of two weeks at Easter, I hope to run up for that period to Oak Hall, when I shall again see my dear old friends. I am making good progress in my studies. I have endeavored to take your advice with regard to associates, for I have but one intimate friend, who is very studious, and an uncommonly smart fellow; he has carried off several prizes; he is a religious youth, and takes no part in any of the diversions common to young men. I think that you will like Ralph Cameron; he is coming home with me. How are old Bruno, and all my pets? With love to the home circle at Ravenswood, I remain, as ever, your affectionate

'Gerald.'



CHAPTER II.

THE GOVERNESS.



MISS CLIFFORD had been for years in a delicate state of health, and had, therefore, been unable to endure the toils of educating her children; she could not bear, however, to remove them from under a mother's influence, and had been fortunate in having secured the services of a governess remarkably gifted as a disciplinarian, and instructress. She had been a resident in their family ever since Frank was seven years old, and Edith eight; nine years of constant and affectionate intercourse had greatly endeared the mother and the governess; and the friendship existing between them was disinterested, elevating, enduring; no single incident had ever marred its happiness, for here were two Christian females united by perfectly sympathizing views in the great business of education. Miss Arnold had some peculiar ideas, very different from old established usage, but having made them known to the parents when she first undertook the charge of the children, they had agreed to all her plans, furnished her abundantly with the means of carrying out her views, and after having been convinced that she was pious, sensible, judicious, and highly intellectual, both parents resigned the government of their interesting family entirely into her hands, and were richly repaid by the fruits of her labors. When she first came

among them, the children were small, and she told Mr. Clifford that she differed much from many, in her opinions of the best means of training the infant intellect. She would not use books for some time, but would at first endeavor to supply their thirsty minds with a stock of clear and simple ideas; therefore she would wish a room where she could have a cabinet filled with specimens from the animal, vegetable, and mineral world, birds, plants, minerals, shells, diagrams, pictures of animals, specimens of everything which could appeal to the senses, numerical frames, a piano, materials for drawing, &c. Mr. Clifford, judging wisely, that money laid out in education was well invested, spared no pains or expense.

Accordingly, a large room, light, airy, cheerful was furnished, as Miss Arnold directed, for a school-room. It was neatly carpeted, provided with pretty desks and chairs, where attention was paid to their fitness for promoting comfort and physical development. The walls were hung with pictures of animals, plants, flowers, costumes of nations,—in fine, everything which could give useful and entertaining information. On one side, were cabinets filled with objects properly classified, birds, butterflies, and insects; another filled with minerals, shells, &c.; another with specimens of all kinds of common objects, such as a tuft of wool, a pod of cotton, a bunch of flax, a cocoon of silk, some stalks of wheat, rye, corn, &c. Pictures descriptive of real islands, mountains, hills, lakes, rivers, valleys, cities, towns, &c., where the object represented as it really exists, gives clear ideas of the terms used in geography. Such a room is like a charming museum, where young pupils would acquire a love of knowledge, such as no thrumming over worn out books could ever supply.

We will pay a visit for a moment to some of the institutions for the education of the young. The school-room is small, confined, and gloomy; the children are seated on low benches, without any support for their backs; some with slates in their hands, scrawling figures without ideas, and letters without meaning. The teacher sits at a desk, with a

dull, lifeless aspect. A poor little child is standing by her side, with a worn-out primer in its hand.

"What letter is that?" Answer, "B."

"No, it is D. What is that?" Answer, "A."

"No, it is O. Now mind, that is O."

The child begins to yawn, and gaze about the room.

"Look on your book; you'll never learn anything. What letter is that?" Answer, "J."

"No, that is G. Now what does that spell?—D-o-g—D-o-g." "I don't know."

"That spells dog. Now, say dog."

By this time the child is very tired, for its interest is not excited. While this tiresome lesson is going on at the desk, the other little ones, becoming weary of their slates, are beginning to tease each other.

"Teacher, Sarah is pulling my hair!"

"Teacher, Harry is rubbing out my figures!"

"Teacher, may I go down-stairs?"

And the poor lady is annoyed for three hours in succession, by similar trials of her patience.

We will turn to another picture, and enter Miss Arnold's inviting room. It is a bright spring morning. Seated at her table, we behold the pleasant teacher, neatly dressed, with a cheerful, smiling aspect. We will describe a day when they were all quite young. Edith, Frank, Madge, Blanche, and Adele, are seated around the table, while Miss Arnold is opening school with little Lilly seated on her lap. Happy children! surrounded by the singing of sweet spring birds around the school-room windows. There is as much of harmony within;—the harmony of loving hearts, of neat attire, of intellectual food, properly administered. Happy children, to be thus early blessed!

On the particular occasion to which we have already referred, all, who are able to read, have Bibles in their hands. Each reads a verse from the Sermon on the Mount. Frank reads, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Miss Arnold questions them as follows:

"Frank, what is meant by poor in spirit?"

"I suppose that it means humble, meek, lowly."

"I'll tell you, dear. I saw a boy, the other day, walking out in the avenue. A country boy, much younger, came along, and said something insulting. The large boy flew at him in a passion, and struck the little boy in the face, giving him a black eye. What kind of a spirit had he?"

Frank's face colored, as he answered, "He had a hasty, passionate temper, I suppose."

"Imagine that he had gone up to the little boy, and said, gently, 'I am sorry that you made that speech. I feel very kindly towards you, and will show you that I do, if you will come with me to the house.' What kind of a spirit would the boy show?"

"He would show a meek and lowly spirit."

"Yes; that is what is meant by being poor in spirit."

"But, Miss Arnold," replied Frank, "the boys would call that mean-spirited."

"Was the blessed Saviour mean-spirited, when it is said of him, that, when dreadfully abused and persecuted, and even struck by cruel men, that 'He opened not his mouth?' Just imagine the holy sufferer, so calm, so quiet, so dignified. Could you call that undaunted, heavenly countenance mean-spirited? And we are told to follow his example."

And thus she continued to remark, for a few minutes, upon these words of Jesus, while the children listened in rapt attention; then going to the piano, she played a sweet hymn, in which they all joined, and then offered a simple, fervent prayer, for guidance, and for blessing.

"Now, children, we are ready for the lessons of the day."

Frank, Edith, and Madge, being old enough, are preparing their recitations; but Blanche, Adele, and Lilly, are taught by another method. Going to a cabinet, Miss Arnold takes out a tuft of wool, and brings it to the table.

"What is this, Blanche?"

"It is wool?"

"Where does it come from?"

"From the back of a sheep."

"What is it used for?"

"Clothing, blankets, carpets, &c."

"Is it hard or soft? Bring me something hard."

Blanche runs and brings a piece of wood.

"Adele, bring me a picture of a sheep."

She runs and brings one.

"What kind of an animal is a sheep?"

"It is gentle, timid, useful."

"Name some of the uses."

Each child eagerly names something.

"Who are compared to lambs in the Bible?"

"Young Christians."

After all these questions, and many more, are asked, the black-board is resorted to, and the words sheep, lamb, wool, hard, &c., are written with chalk on the board, and the children taught to spell and pronounce each carefully. Thus, with each word, ideas are connected.

"Now to what kingdom does the sheep belong?"

"To the animal kingdom," replies Adele.

"How many different kingdoms are in this room?"

"Three."

"What are they?"

"The animal, the vegetable, and the mineral kingdoms."

"Name an animal, Lilly."

She eagerly calls out, "A peacock."

"Name a vegetable."

Another calls out, "Wheat, rye, corn."

"Name a mineral."

Another eagerly exclaims, "Slate, crystal, iron, gold."

The blackboard is called for again. Peacock, wheat, rye, corn, slate, crystal, iron are spelled.

"Now which of you can give me an account of what you have learned to-day?"

Blanche threw up her little hand again.

"Well, let me hear," said Miss Arnold.

"We have learned that wool grows on the back of sheep ;

that the sheep is very timid, gentle, useful; that wool is useful for clothing, blankets, carpets. We have learned that all things are divided into three kingdoms,—the animal, the vegetable, and mineral. This room is full of such things.”

“Now, children, get your slates, and copy the words from the black-board; that is your writing and spelling lesson.”

Any intelligent person witnessing the interest manifested in such a lesson, would be at once convinced by the animated looks and gestures of these highly favored children, that here the intellect is really improved, and the pupils deeply interested. When the copy is completed, and the words correctly spelled, their kind teacher, with a pleasant smile, says: “Now, children, run out a little while, and see which of you can bring me specimens from all the kingdoms which I have named to-day.” While they are gone, she proceeds to hear Frank and the two girls their lesson in General History; every difficult word is explained, and they are not only required to recite perfectly, but to make their own remarks upon characters, incidents, &c., as they proceed; after this lesson has been fully mastered, they are required to write an abstract in a book prepared for the purpose, ready for next day. No mere parrot teaching is inflicted upon these children; books are made interesting, and knowledge delightful. Their school-room is one of the happiest spots in the house, and not a place for stupefying the puzzled brains of unfortunate children. In about half an hour, Blanche has brought in a pigeon, Adele a bunch of flowers, and Lilly a rusty old nail.

“Name this, children,” said Miss Arnold, as she caught the pigeon.

“Mine is an animal,” said Blanche. “And mine a vegetable,” said Adele. “And mine a mineral,” said little Lilly.

After a sprightly lesson in geography, and an animating game of mental arithmetic, Miss Arnold bade the children prepare for their walk, and quickly attired in suitable clothing, they started off on their daily excursion. On this

morning, she directed their course down the avenue, and out into the road, which led them down a steep hill, until they reached a shady lane.

"I am going to take you this morning, children, down to old Aunt Becky's; she is very sick, and perhaps she wants something."

They all ran cheerfully along, except Madge, who was a wilful child, and never willing to take out-door exercise. Miss Arnold saw that a perverse fit was on her; she did not chide her, but turning to her, pleasantly, said:

"Come, Madge, I want you for my little companion; Blanche and Adele have run away from me."

"My shoe pinches me, Miss Arnold, and I would rather go back home."

"Come here, Madge, and I will make it comfortable," and taking off her shoe, she perceived that there was a crease in her stocking, which she soon smoothed, and the child could then walk comfortably. Blanche and Adele were in high glee, and ran races all the way, and when they reached Aunt Becky's cottage, their glowing faces brightened the old woman's lowly dwelling. They found her suffering very much with the "rheumatiz," as she styled it.

"Bless your dear hearts, young ladies, I'm right glad to see you, for I'm so lonesome like when my old man goes away to work, that I feel, sometimes, as if I must get right out of bed, and go too, but I'm so lame, that I can hardly move, any how."

"Can we do anything for you, aunty?" said Miss Arnold.

"Well, honey, if you could send me a little nice tea, and some warm flannel for my old limbs, I would be a thousand times obleeged to ye."

"You shall have what you want, aunty; shall I read a few verses to you from the blessed book?"

"Yes, and thank'ee, too, dear."

Miss Arnold, telling the children to be seated, read a few verses from her little pocket Testament, which she always carried with her. Aunt Becky thanked her warmly, and

then they bade the old woman good-bye, promising to send the comforts she needed. Frank and Edith engaged to bring them in the afternoon, and thus they had learned another lesson, on the duty and blessedness of deeds of benevolence. These were the practical lessons daily learned from their excellent governess; the intellect, the heart, the character were daily strengthened and purified, under her blessed influence.

When they returned, the three elder children resumed their studies, which occupied their time, until within half an hour of dinner. Miss Arnold was a fine classical scholar; she conducted these branches with the elder children, and was preparing Frank for college. Contrary to her usual course, she permitted Madge at twelve to commence these studies, for the child's understanding was so remarkable, that she had really mastered all the elementary branches of an English education; music and drawing also had a proper place in her instruction. Having deep insight into character, she wielded the sceptre of authority with a skilful hand, and while she had secured general obedience, the mode by which she governed, could scarcely have been described by her young charge.

Frank's impetuous character had caused her much anxiety. Madge's perverse, unconquerable will sadly perplexed, and sometimes baffled even her powers of government; Adele's love of fun, and talent for repartee caused her great uneasiness; and Blanche's weakness of purpose, and yielding disposition, often alarmed her watchful friend. With Madge she endeavored to avoid a contest, but if the gauntlet was thrown down by the obstinate child, Miss Arnold never yielded one inch of requirements once laid down. Adele was constantly offending, and promising to do better. Edith was a source of great comfort; having a mind of a high order; to instruct her, was a work of unmingled pleasure. High and lofty principles of action, were daily striking their roots down deeply into her character, and though pride was still her failing, Miss Arnold hoped that

years, and the grace which she desired for her beloved pupil, would finally exterminate the poisoned weed.

She often looked with trembling anxiety at the pallid countenance, and feeble step of her dear friend, the mother of this family, and prayed earnestly that God would spare the Christian mother to her flock. Mrs. Clifford's physician sometimes spoke of a residence in the south of France, as probably the only means which could restore her health, and Mr. Clifford was seriously weighing the whole matter in his mind. He had written to friends residing there, asking what accommodations could be obtained for so large a family; what would be the best mode of reaching there, and all other information necessary, ere taking a step which might prove so important; this he intended, however, should be a last resort, as he had heard much of Magnolia, a place in Florida, celebrated for invalids. With the advice of his physician, he had concluded that in the following autumn, he would take his beloved wife to this institution, ere the cold season should commence; and if no benefit was derived from this, a removal to the continent would be the next step. Madge became increasingly perverse and troublesome; it required all Miss Arnold's wisdom to know how to manage her.

One morning when the bell for school rang, the little girl was nowhere to be found; after a long search, one of the servants discovered her secreted in an old garret, with her favorite volume of Shakespeare in her hand.

"Miss Madge, Miss Arnold has sent me to call you down to school."

"I won't go, and you may tell her so if you please. I am reading one of my favorite plays, and I won't go until I have done."

"Shall I tell her what you say?"

"To be sure you may, I'm not afraid of anybody."

In a few minutes, Madge heard Miss Arnold's foot upon the stair-case; too proud to hide, she boldly met Miss Arnold's look of astonishment, with one of angry defiance.

"Madge, come down with me, you are setting a dreadful example to your little sisters."

Madge was sullen and silent.

"Will you not come?"

"No, I will not; I am tired of being led about like a poor, tame little slave."

"Who told you that you are a poor, little slave?"

"Never mind, Miss Arnold, I have one friend who thinks something of me."

"Do you mean Josephine Fortescue? if you do, she is a bad adviser; if you persevere, Madge, in your disobedience, you will break your mother's heart."

Madge was softened for a minute, but at last she said,

"My mother does not care for me, she loves her beautiful children better, what need I care for her?"

"Oh! Madge, beware how you indulge in such wicked rebellion. Will you come, or will you not?"

"I will not."

"Then listen to what I have to say. You remain here in confinement, where your meals will be sent, until you are in a more obedient state of mind;" and with these words, Miss Arnold turned sorrowfully away, locked the door, and put the key in her pocket.

Much as it grieved her, she was obliged to tell Mrs. Clifford of the state of affairs, in accounting for Madge's absence from the family circle. The mother fully justified Miss Arnold in her course. Her meals were sent up regularly, by the maid in charge of the nursery, and at bed-time, she entered the next room, where she staid all night, for fear that Madge should be frightened in the dark.

But the child remained inexorable; for one week she refused obedience, until at last, Mrs. Clifford was taken up stairs, and with faltering step and tearful eyes, she entered the room of this misguided, rebellious child. Madge really loved her mother, and the sight of her pale, suffering face, overcame her, and throwing her arms around her, in an agony of grief, she begged forgiveness.

When Madge appeared again in the school-room, the children were all delighted, for they could not bear to feel that any one of their number was in a state of punishment. She recited her lessons, performed her tasks, but after that was done, she shrank again into her gloomy shell of sullenness and reserve, and poring over her favorite books, was all the pleasure which she really enjoyed.

Frank sometimes made an attempt to draw her out, but she always repulsed him with scorn; even Edith had no influence; she was angry with Blanche, because she was so beautiful, and with Adele, because she was so merry and witty. One day, moping in her corner, Adele came running up to her, and saying, in a sportive manner,

It is very well seen,
That Madge is a queen,
For her walk is so lofty and grand;
She holds up her head,
It is frequently said,
Far above all the great in the land,

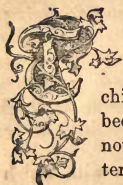
Madge did not fancy the mocking reverence with which Adele went backing out of the room, as though in the presence of majesty.

Mrs. Clifford and Miss Arnold had many consultations about the misguided, unhappy child; and both concluded that obedience must be enforced at all times; and although they could not change the proud and wayward heart, they could take her case to the Great Physician, who only could expel the evil spirit. When alone, she still brooded sullenly over what she called her wrongs; ever complaining that no one loved her, constantly forgetting that love begets love, and attributing to others, faults most glaring in herself. But resolutely she kept her feelings to herself; and as usual, avoided all society but that which she found in books. And yet there was in that little heart a capacity for loving, yea, and that to idolatry; but the question who should awaken that better spirit, had not yet been answered.



CHAPTER III.

THE STRONG-MINDED WOMAN.



HE nearest neighbors to the Cliffords, were the Fortescue family, the wealthy occupants of Oak Hall. Both parents had died when the children were very young, consequently, they had been placed under the care of an estimable, but not very energetic lady, Miss Mary Preston, a sister of Mrs. Fortescue.

Gerald, the younger, had always been an amiable, gentle boy, very imaginative, and passionately fond of the beautiful, whether in nature or art; his talent for painting was very remarkable, and had early developed itself in the youth. With these refined and delicate tastes, were corresponding traits of character; although possessed of warm affections, a lack of firmness was his great defect; on this account Aunt Mary and Mrs. Clifford dreaded the period when he should come into contact with the world around him, and be called upon to act on the great theatre of human life.

Josephine, on the contrary, who was the elder, early exhibited great talents and strong traits of character; an indomitable will, and great pride of opinion made her, even in her childhood, quite beyond the control of good Aunt Mary, who was advised to send her early away from home. A celebrated institution in New England was chosen as the

place where Josephine Fortescue was to be fitted for woman's holy calling. It was a college of great note, and as she had exhibited uncommon gifts, a school was selected that presented the very highest advantages. It had not been told innocent Aunt Mary that the whole tendency of education there was masculine, and would foster all those peculiarities which she wished most carefully corrected.

When she heard of Spartan strength mingled with Attic refinement, she thought that it was some great achievement in the field of education, and that these were names of some great men, who had named their systems after themselves, and there she rested satisfied.

Josephine's reports from year to year were most flattering; she obtained many prizes, and although in her visits home during seasons of vacation, her good aunt saw that her views became still more independent, and her manners more rude and dogmatical, she thought that it was impossible to check these strong tendencies, and was therefore contented to let matters take their own course.

Occasionally, papers were sent home giving accounts of the pupils' performances in public, and frequently the name of Josephine Fortescue was pointed out, as the one excelling in composition and oratory. Articles were often sent from her pen, that displayed great vigor of intellect in one so young; but the subjects she discussed, were those belonging especially to the province of man. Political economy, slavery, woman's rights, moral reform, the age of progress, the downfall of priestcraft and superstition, were the subjects chiefly engrossing her attention; and Aunt Mary, though sometimes alarmed at some of her bold expressions, did not see the tendency of all this unwomanly pride of intellect.

When Josephine graduated, it was with high honors; and her misguided female friends predicted for her, most unwisely, a brilliant course in the world of letters. Upon her return home, she brought with her one of the great advocates of her new theories, Miss Penelope Grimshaw, a tall,

commanding, masculine woman, a great contrast to the feminine appearance of her young friend, for Josephine was possessed of a very agreeable figure, and handsome, though strikingly marked countenance.

Miss Grimshaw seemed to possess unbounded influence over Josephine, and they proceeded at once to improve some of good Aunt Mary's old-fashioned notions of housekeeping and feminine propriety.

Miss Grimshaw had brought her own horse, and two dogs, which she attended to herself. Josephine, of course, must have the same, on the plea that out-door sports were indispensable to health; and that a woman had as good a right to take charge of the stable and kennel as a man, if it suited her notions and her views of health.

Much to Aunt Mary's surprise and dislike, in a few days Josephine and Miss Grimshaw, at an early hour in the morning, made their appearance in their stable dress,—high boots, very short dresses, and a coarse, dark smock, with hair turned entirely back, under a man's cap. Thus arrayed, they proceeded to the stable, where they curried their horses, fed their dogs, then returned to breakfast, and immediately after, dressed in a very masculine habit, and accompanied by their dogs, they started for a ride on horseback. They were accomplished riders, and thought nothing of leaping a five-barred fence, fording creeks, and dashing ahead over all obstacles. They soon became subjects of remark among the old-fashioned farmers.

Their morning hours were devoted to their studies, which were very severe.

Miss Grimshaw was a noted character, and publicly maintained the doctrine, that women, possessed of talents, had as good a right to be a physician, a lawyer, a statesman, or a preacher, as man, provided she possessed the ability. She was filling Josephine's mind with an overwhelming conceit of her superiority, and urging her to obey the call which she affirmed had already been given to the young girl, saying, that gifts such as her's must be exercised for the public

good. They both manifested much contempt for the proprieties of female attire, and would conform to no fashion if they esteemed it at all inconvenient or troublesome.

In avoiding long dresses, which trammelled their movements, they wore theirs immodestly short, very high in the neck, and plain linen collars, on the ground that any attention paid to their attire was a waste of time, forgetting that should all females follow the course which they had adopted, hundreds, yea, thousands, would be deprived of a means of support, which the use of articles of taste constantly furnishes. They paid no particular attention to female accomplishments generally, as they contended that they were only of use to the common class of females, and unworthy of their notice. Miss Grimshaw had attempted sculpture, and Josephine displayed considerable talent for painting; but all her subjects were chosen from among models suitable for a masculine taste. Aunt Mary was much grieved on witnessing these developments in her niece. She endeavored to direct her talents in another channel, but Josephine only pitied her narrow mind, and turned a deaf ear to her kind, womanly advice. Mrs. Clifford and Miss Arnold were peculiarly shocked, and feared the unsettling of all that was lovely and of good report in woman.

During Miss Grimshaw's stay at Oak Hall, a notice appeared in a New York paper of a lecture on "woman's rights," to be delivered by that lady at one of the public halls. She presented tickets to the Clifford family; but none attended, as their ideas of female modesty and decorum, utterly prevented their acceptance. Josephine accompanied Miss Grimshaw, and much offended her aunt by sitting on the platform with her and other persons of kindred sentiments. She delivered her lecture in a masterly manner, and betrayed not the slightest embarrassment at the sight of so large an audience. Occasional hisses did not daunt her in the least, when uttering some sentiments which were too bold and unblushing, even for an audience composed chiefly of those who sympathised with her in her views.

On the next day, Josephine paid a visit to the Cliffords, and meeting Miss Arnold, she said, "I am sorry that you were not with us last evening; you missed a great treat."

"I would not sanction by my presence, what I do heartily disapprove of, Josephine," replied Miss Arnold.

"And pray why? Are you also a slave to the vulgar prejudice of hiding a woman's talents under a bushel?" asked the young lady.

"By no means, my young friend. I wish woman to obey the divine precept of our Lord, when he says, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven.' I apprehend that the hand which penned the little word *so*, would veil the uncovered heads of those strong-minded ladies, and point them away from the forum, the pulpit, and the hall of public debate, to the sweet retirement of the private fireside; or, if her spirit burned to scatter light by her pen, it would kindly open the door of her study, whence she might with true womanly modesty, pour out a stream of gentle, holy influence, refreshing as the silent dew, and leave to man the stormy arena of fierce debate."

"And would you condemn those female apostles, who, possessed of mental power, seek to influence public opinion, and to correct moral abuses?" asked Josephine.

"Your question is answered in the word of God, Josephine; where, in the blessed sanctuary of home, as a mother, wife, sister, friend, teacher, or a sympathizer with human griefs, woman is directed to exert her influence."

"And what would you have a woman do with her talents, when they are of an uncommon order?" asked Josephine.

"In the beautiful sphere where God has placed her, to use them for His glory," replied Miss Arnold.

"And pray tell me, is the quiet privacy of home a theatre, where a gifted woman can display her talents? Will you not allow that many women are possessed of masculine minds?"

"I do; but I do not think that they are so much to be

admired or beloved, as those who are more feminine," answered Miss Arnold.

"When thus endowed, will you pretend to say, Miss Arnold, that they ought not to aspire to men's positions, on account of the mere difference in sex?" asked Josephine.

"Listen, my young friend, while I quote the language of inspiration; this covers the whole ground of woman's holy duties and blessed privileges.

"'Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection; but I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.' And again: 'Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak: but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.' 'And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.' This is the language of the apostle Paul; and furthermore, laying aside the negative, let me direct your attention to positive obligations. 'That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, keepers at home, *obedient* to their own husbands.' And again: 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife.' 'For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands, even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord.'"

"I answer to all this," proudly replied Josephine, "that if the apostle had lived in these days of progress, he would have known woman's place much better."

"Do you pretend to say, my child, that the apostle was not inspired?" asked Miss Arnold, much pained.

"It is a matter of much dispute among deep thinkers," answered the young girl. "It appears to me that he took very narrow and contracted views, as regards woman's rights."

"What do you mean by that popular phrase, Josephine?"

"I mean that she is entitled to perfect equality with man, when God has endowed her with superior abilities."

"If you wish to place woman where she can exercise wondrous power, it is by the domestic fireside. Ask the history of our great men, and observe how many can trace their goodness, and their greatness also, back to the period when a holy mother planted the first germs of divine truth in the young heart."

"And yet, Miss Arnold, the language held by the apostle Paul seems to imply a degree of servitude that no intellectual woman could possibly render, especially to one who is greatly her inferior," answered Josephine.

"Let her see that she chooses for her companion one whom she can and ought to respect and love," replied Miss Arnold, "and then Scriptural obedience will be a pleasant yoke; but, Josephine, I am really amused sometimes, when I hear silly women complaining of oppression in a land like ours. I presume nowhere in the world has she so many rights as here. If she is a good and holy woman, in her household she is a queen, and generally leads her spouse by silken reins, even when he imagines that he is governing; as a sister, her brothers pay the greatest deference to her opinions; as a daughter, a word is sufficient; as a *woman*, alone, or in public and in private, she receives universal respect; in public vehicles, and at places of amusement, the best seat; at the table, the first and best served; and everywhere in America she enjoys her full share of privileges;—there may be some exceptions to all general rules, but the tendency of our nation is to elevate woman."

Josephine, with her usual obstinacy, maintained her opinions, but as Miss Arnold knew that she had a heart, from the love which she manifested for her brother, she hoped that her errors might yet be corrected, although she saw much trouble and disappointment in her path. She avoided female companions, because she esteemed so few her equals; she had seen but few of the other sex, and would be slow to acknowledge them her superiors. She really loved her brother Gerald, but she deeply regretted what she regarded his want of manliness, and was constantly lecturing him on his deficiencies.

He often wrote to her of his friend Ralph, and from his description, Josephine felt much anxiety to know his friend, as she gathered from her brother's letters that he was not a common character, and she hoped that he would imbue her gentle, imaginative brother with some of his mental and moral power. She regarded her brother's reverence for sacred things as another mark of weakness, and in order to show her own freedom from priestcraft and superstition, grieved her good pastor by her neglect of the house, and her desecration of the day of God.

On the holy Sabbath, frequently in the company of Miss Grimshaw, she either spent her time in reading secular books, or else in riding on horseback. Miss Arnold remonstrated, and Mrs. Clifford added her gentle voice of warning, but Josephine was first in pursuing her path of rebellion against the authority of God, and sneered at those who bent the neck to the Saviour's gentle yoke. Her good pastor, the Rev. Mr. Berkely, sometimes ventured a remonstrance, but she pleaded superior light, and turned a deaf ear to his warnings.

Her example to her servants was all on the side of ungodliness, and Aunt Mary grieved too late, that she had unconsciously placed her among evil influences; but she was surrounded by an atmosphere of prayer; Mr. Berkely, good Aunt Mary, Mrs. Clifford, and Miss Arnold, bore her case daily to a throne of grace, and looked in faith for an answer of peace.



CHAPTER IV.

RALPH CAMERON.



TIME sped on eagles' wings. Frank was rapidly preparing for college; and Edith was daily improving under the training of her beloved teacher in all that was good. Winter faded gradually, until it died in the lap of spring; and the young girl began to look forward with bright anticipations to Gerald's return. She counted the weeks, then the days, then the hours, as he was expected on the day before Easter. Edith, seated on the piazza, was watching for the first glimpse of his approaching figure. The veil of evening descended, and she was almost despairing, when she saw Bruno scampering and barking up the avenue, as if in great glee; and in the next minute, his young master came flying up the old familiar path, with cap in hand, accompanied by a youth somewhat older than himself. In another moment, a warm grasp of the hand, and glowing smiles, testified to the joy of the young friend. Gerald then turned, and introduced his friend, Ralph Cameron. For a youth of twenty, his figure was commanding, his step firm, and his whole appearance striking. He had the eye of an eagle, but which could sometimes melt, under the influence of the gentler emotions of the heart. The expression of his mouth indicated an undaunted will; generally his look was stern, but when he smiled, the rich glow lit up his whole countenance.

"And this is Sister Edith," said Ralph. "You know not what a talisman there was in your letters, and how often they impelled Gerald to fresh exertions."

Edith blushed as she replied, "It made me very happy to write them."

By this time they had entered the house, and Gerald, warmly greeted by all, introduced his friend Ralph to the family group. Blanche and Adele were full of open expressions of joy.

"Oh! Gerald, won't we have some nice rows in the boat? It is so delightful to sail about now on the river, and we have wanted you so much to help Frank row."

Madge was pleased to see Gerald, but she kept her eyes resolutely on the ground, for fear that he would see them flash the joy which she really felt.

"Madge, come here, I have something for you," said Gerald, and as she approached, he presented her with a beautiful copy of Longfellow's Poems. As she raised her eyes for once, Ralph was struck with their exceeding beauty; but more with the expression of tearful gratitude which they expressed. Forgetting herself for one minute, she seized Gerald's hand, kissing it warmly; in a minute, she was so frightened at what she had done, that she hastily retreated with her treasure, to a corner of the room. Ralph was attracted by the singular manner of the child, and more so, as he observed with what eagerness she devoured the volume, and wondered whether one so young could appreciate all its beauties.

When he found a suitable opportunity, he seated himself by Madge, and said to her,

"What are you reading, my little friend?"

She scarcely raised her eyes, as she replied, timidly,

"Evangeline."

"Do you like such poetry?"

"I love it better than anything else;" and for fear of any more remarks, she arose hastily, and left the room.

After tea, the family assembled in the drawing-room, where a great deal of sportive conversation, and a number of merry games occupied the evening. All but Madge partook of the

sport; and when Ralph came forward and begged her to join them, she replied rather sullenly, "They don't want me, I'm nobody here."

"Do you ever try them, or are you not in the habit of shunning your brothers and sisters? They seem to be bright happy little things!"

She turned an angry look upon Ralph, as she replied, "What right have you to question me? I would rather be let alone."

"I'm not often baffled," replied Ralph, "and I have made up my mind that you shall play to-night. I know that you want to, and I mean to have you for my companion in the sport."

She looked at Ralph, and seeing a determined look upon his face, she rather liked the expression, and putting aside her book, went along with him.

Believing that the little girl was not so disagreeable as she tried to appear, he resolved to thaw the icy surface. All looked surprised when they saw Madge at first going unwillingly and at last close by the side of Ralph Cameron, really enjoying the fun.

"Edith, just look at Madge," said Gerald. "The enchanter has waved his wand over her, and she is entirely obedient to his will; this is the way Ralph rules everybody."

"I am truly glad, Gerald," replied Edith, "for really the child's moodiness is sometimes insufferable, and very trying to dear mamma."

After the sports were all over, Madge kept close to Ralph, who tried to draw her into conversation, and found that the child possessed a remarkable mind, such as is seldom seen in childhood. She talked freely about her studies, and Madge seemed to be far advanced for one so young; she was quite a good Latin scholar and mathematician, excellent in history, but her passion for poetry was astonishing; she could repeat whole pages of Shakespeare, but displayed a correct taste in her selections. Madge had never so completely unlocked her heart to any one as to Ralph Cameron; she felt happy, because she saw that for once she was appreciated; and she looked up

gratefully to the young man who had passed by her lovely sisters, Edith and Blanche, and her witty sparkling Adele, and had devoted himself for a whole morning to ugly little Madge. He soon understood her character, and felt a strong desire to prune its wild shoots, and cultivate the flowers, for he contended that there was much that was redeeming in her strong nature. While he remained at Oak Hall, Gerald and he were daily visitors; in all their excursions they accompanied the young people, and their presence added greatly to their enjoyment.

Madge was powerfully drawn to Ralph, for she admired his genius, respected his character, and was grateful for his kindness; moreover, she was a little afraid of him, and though so perverse with others, she allowed Ralph to lead her where he would.

On the Sunday after their return, Gerald and Ralph called to go to church with the Cliffords. Madge came forward evidently in her dishabille. Ralph, looking surprised, said:

"You are not ready for church."

"No; I am not going to-day."

"And why not?" said Ralph.

"Because I don't want to; I am not very well."

"That means very lazy; does it not, Madge?"

She hung her head and made no reply.

"Does your mother wish you to go?"

"She does."

"Then, Madge, run and get dressed; I am not going without you," said Ralph.

She stole a look at his face, and saw just what he meant. She did not like to be so conquered all the time, and yet she had not the courage to refuse. So she quietly walked into the house, and came back very soon, and while waiting for the carriage, the following conversation took place.

"Madge, I am sorry to see that you allow yourself to be so whimsical; you know your duty, why do you take so much pleasure in acting contrary to it?"

"I don't know, Ralph, but there does seem to be such a spirit

of contradiction in me, that even when I know it to be wrong, I am led on headlong."

"Madge, you are a little girl, but you have a strange character; if this powerful will is directed aright, and bent while you are young into the proper course, you may make a firm Christian woman; but if you allow it to draw you headlong into the path of disobedience, who knows where it may stop?"

Madge raised her eyes, which were now swimming in tears, to Ralph's face, and he could scarcely withstand their touching appeal, as she said to him, what she had never said to mortal man before:

"Forgive me, Ralph. I know you are my friend, you tell me so kindly of my faults, and you *make* me do what is right; when you are near me, I feel impelled to do my duty but what shall I do when you are gone?"

"Do not forget, Madge, that there is a strong and gracious Being ever near you; He only can aid you to conquer that strong will; He only can subdue your proud heart, and make you meek and lowly."

Ralph Cameron was a young man of sterling Christian character; he had seen much in the dark, awkward little girl to interest him; he soon perceived that she had uncommon talents, but a most perverse and stubborn will; but he had also discovered that there were warm affections in that young heart, and though so carefully hidden in its deep recesses, he had succeeded in awakening them, and bringing them into life.

Still, with others, the same disposition exhibited itself; the same impatience of restraint, the same determined sullenness, the same jealousy of her sister's merits; while these remained, Ralph's hopes were frequently dashed to the ground. And yet he could not but love the child, for she really appeared to regard him with a species of idolatry; and his influence over her continued unbounded.

Her tyrannical temper was often exercised over her younger sisters, and Miss Arnold sought in vain to control her wayward

pupil. Lilly was a remarkably sweet and gentle child, timid and retiring, and had from her infancy been very delicate. She was now about six years old, and was very tenderly beloved by all save Madge, who was constantly finding fault with the poor little girl, and making her life very unhappy.

One day, Madge and Lilly had been sent to take a basket of little comforts to Aunt Becky, and some other poor persons in the neighborhood.

Madge was directed, of course, to carry the basket. She was not in a very good humor when she started, and when about half way, she made Lilly take the basket, and carry it for some distance. It was a heavy load for such a little girl; she soon became very tired, and unable to proceed any farther.

"Oh, sister, I am so tired," said Lilly, as she sank down by the roadside.

"You are a lazy little thing!" said Madge; "you only want to make me carry the basket all the way."

"Indeed, I am very tired, sister, but I'll try again." And the poor child, with streaming eyes, picked up the heavy load, and started off again. She had not gone far, when she sank down again on a stone step, by the side of a small stream.

"Give me the basket," said Madge, as she pushed little Lilly aside; and the child, being very weak, fell over into the stream. Fortunately, it was very shallow, and Madge succeeded in getting her out of the water, but she was wet to the skin, and how to get her home was now the question. She could not walk; she was in danger of taking cold in her wet clothes. Madge saw some men approaching with a wagon, and running up to them, told her story, and begged the men to take them home. They kindly consented. Poor little Lilly was completely overcome. Madge was terribly alarmed, for she saw that the child was very sick.

When they reached home, Madge, who was really truthful, told the story just as it was.

Miss Arnold carried the fainting child up to her bed. Violent chills succeeded, and then burning fever raged

furiously. The child soon became delirious, and all her cry was, "Oh, sister, I am not lazy! I am so tired; don't make me carry the heavy basket. I am so sick! Oh, sister, help me! help me!"

It may be well imagined with what feelings of agony Madge listened to these heart-rending cries. Her anxiety was so extreme, that she could scarcely keep away from the child's chamber-door; but these dreadful cries would send her to the gloomy garret, when, with bitter reproaches, she mourned over the alarming illness of her sweet little sister.

For days, her life hung upon a thread. At last the crisis arrived. As she lay so unconscious, and almost as silent as death, Madge watched in an agony of remorse. The pulse was scarcely perceptible. "Oh, for one moment of consciousness, that she might whisper forgiveness ere she dies." This was the agonizing cry of the self-accusing spirit. "If she should die, where should I hide my head?"

None reproached her, for all around her saw what bitter anguish she was suffering. Ralph was greatly distressed. He tried in vain to see her, but since the day of the fatal occurrence, she had carefully avoided his presence. One morning, crossing the hall, he perceived the wretched girl, with her head bowed down, and dejected step, walking down the avenue. Ralph started, with quickened pace, to join her; but as soon as Madge perceived him, she ran off, as if to avoid him.

"Madge! Madge! do not run away from me! Stop! stop! I must speak to you!"

She paused for one moment, and seeing Ralph's expression of distress, waited for him, with a downcast countenance.

"I am not going to reproach you, Madge. I know what you must suffer," said Ralph.

"Don't speak kindly to me, Ralph; I don't deserve it," said Madge. "I am the murderer of my little sister; everybody ought to hate me."

"She may not die, Madge. I have prayed for her life, and I trust that the symptoms to-day are more favorable."

"Even should she live, Ralph, I am the same wicked, imperious child; my temper will be my ruin yet," answered Madge.

"Do you try to overcome it? Have you ever gone to Jesus, and laid your heart down at his blessed feet, and asked him to make it clean?"

"No, Ralph, I do not think that I have, for I fear that it would be hypocritical in me to attempt to pray after such cruelty."

"Are you not very sorry, Madge?" said Ralph.

"Yes, I think that I am; but then I have been just as sorry before, and have fallen again into dreadful sin. I think if Lilly should die, I shall never wish to see any one again."

Taking the little girl by the hand, and walking up and down the avenue, they continued to converse for some time, and Madge had lost much of her despairing expression before she entered the house.

Great was the anxiety manifested by the whole family in little Lilly's long slumber, it having been said by the physician that she would either insensibly pass away, or awake to life and health once more. Her deathlike sleep continued for many hours. Late in the evening, she unclosed her eyes, and recognizing her mother, stretched out her hand and whispered, "Dear mamma, come kiss me." These were the first rational words she had uttered since her illness.

Ralph and Madge were in an adjoining room, waiting anxiously for the result; and when the tidings reached them of her returning consciousness, the overwrought feelings of the remorseful child sought relief in violent convulsive weeping. With all the kindness of a brother, Ralph endeavored to soothe the little girl. He sympathized with her joy, and said, "Do not let us forget to thank God for his goodness. I trust that it is the beginning of better things for you, Madge."

Lilly continued to mend rapidly, and on asking for Madge, she said, "I do not see you so plainly as I used to, sister, but I suppose it is because I am weak; but I know, Madge, how sorry you have been for making me sick, and I want to tell

you not to cry about it any more;" and the sweet child drew her sister down to her, and kissed her affectionately.

Madge wept now as much for joy, as she had formerly done for grief; and Miss Arnold hoped that the dearly-bought lesson would never be forgotten; but "can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" has been asked by inspiration of the deeply-rooted sins of unrenewed nature. The answer can only be given in other equally impressive words of inspiration: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," and that *alone*. No maternal counsel; no judicious teaching; no faithful, watchful friend; no power of a strong will, could be found sufficient of themselves to work in Madge Clifford the change which grace alone could effect. Much anxiety was felt about the continued weakness of Lilly's eyes, and when it was found that she could not distinguish pictures which had once been so familiar, it was feared that her sight was seriously affected. The dimness increased daily, until at last it was declared by her physician, that Lilly was incurably blind. It was fearful to behold the agony of Madge. Lilly's faltering step and beautiful but sightless eyes, were a perpetual reproach to the poor child. When little Lilly first realized her misfortune her patient sorrow was touching in the extreme.

"Mamma, shall I never see the bright sun again, or the beautiful flowers? Shall I never see your dear face any more?"

"It is God's will, Lilly, and we must not complain."

"Won't I be a great deal of trouble to you all, mamma? I shall not be able to go about by myself, and then I cannot learn any more like the others; but I will try to be patient, dear mamma, for your sake."

"Don't talk about trouble, my child; we all love you so much that we shall be glad to wait upon you, and there are many things which you can be taught to do, Lilly. I will get you some of the books made for the blind, and Miss Arnold will do all that she can for you; and when you are old enough we will send you to an institution, where you can be taught everything."

"Mamma, don't let Madge know how I feel about being blind, it troubles her so much."

"I will not, my dear; she has been punished enough for her unkindness."

From this day Mrs. Clifford's love for her blind child increased, and Lilly was almost her constant companion; weak as Mrs. Clifford was, she devoted all the strength which she yet possessed, to interest and instruct the little afflicted one; the love between the two was particularly strong and tender.

Madge was quite as much an object of pity as poor little Lilly, and Miss Arnold and the mother both hoped much from the state of mind which she manifested. Still, the governess was not very sanguine, as there seemed to be no decidedly religious feeling operating upon her heart. She appeared to be yet almost as perverse with others as formerly, and there was no particular reason to suppose that she was any more prayerful in her habits. Many motives besides penitence toward God might have produced her present state of feeling. Sympathy with affliction which she had created, seemed now to be the most powerful feeling.

She yet stood aloof from childish intercourse; her desire for solitude became still greater, and none but Ralph Cameron could succeed in drawing the wayward child from her gloomy thoughts. Seeing how sad she was, and sometimes even sullen, Ralph sought by a variety of means to amuse the child, and was busy inventing schemes of outdoor enjoyment. At one time, an excursion into the woods, then a sail upon the water, then a ride on horseback, served to vary the daily amusements, and Madge began to dread the day when Ralph and Gerald must return to their college duties.



CHAPTER V.

ROSY DREAMS.



DITH and Gerald were sad at the thought of parting so soon, and ere the day arrived, it was proposed that the young people, in company with Miss Arnold, should form a party to a favorite place of resort, a neighboring country seat, about five miles off, now in a state of ruin. They were to go in boats, taking provision for the day, and after a pic-nic in the old park, were to return late in the afternoon. The party was composed of the Cliffords, the Fortescues, and Ralph Cameron.

Gerald and Frank took charge of one boat, and old Uncle Ben of the second. They were plentifully provided with ham, cold chicken, tarts, etc., and set off about nine o'clock.

It was a beautiful May morning, the fresh vivid green of early spring enlivened the landscape, and the bright sun gleamed over the whole scene, illumining the romantic Hudson, which sparkled like diamonds in its brilliant rays. Had it not been for poor blind little Lilly, who wiped away a silent tear when she heard the delighted exclamations of the party, and which also called up a deep sigh from sorrowful Madge, it would have been a day of unmixed pleasure. Ralph, with his usual kindness, talked with Madge, and tried to amuse her; and she, nearly always gentle with him, found his society a sufficient source of happiness. When they

arrived, Madge led little Lilly about, searched out the buttercups and violets for the child, and tried by many pleasant means to beguile the tedious time. Gerald and Edith were seldom apart, and in pleasant strolls and confidential chat, the day passed too rapidly away.

After much enjoyment they returned home late in the afternoon; it was the last excursion previous to the young men's return. After tea, Edith walked out alone; she felt sad, for it was the last evening that Gerald would be with them, as he was to return on the next day to college. She strolled down the avenue until she reached the front gate; standing there, under her favorite elm, in a pensive mood, she watched the setting sun as it gradually declined in all its glory, on the opposite side of the Hudson, and lighting up the whole landscape with brilliant tints of beauty. With her large flat thrown back, exposing all her face, she seemed to be in a deep reverie; there must have been pleasant thoughts lighting up the beautiful face with such radiant smiles of happiness: the eyes were generally fixed upon the glowing landscape, but occasionally they would droop, when a deep blush overspread her face at the remembrance of some words whispered that day for the first time, by Gerald Fortescue. The glowing clouds on which she gazed, chasing each other over the landscape, were not more beautiful than the rosy tints which illumined her lofty countenance; but with this difference,—the former were declining glories, the latter wore the first enchanting tints of young affection's rising morn. As she stood musing silently, for some time, she did not observe a figure running rapidly down the avenue, until a quick familiar footstep announced Gerald's approach; she looked around, and encountered, with a blushing face, the gaze of Gerald Fortescue.

"I am glad to find you here, Edith," said the young man. "I go to-morrow, and must have a few words with you ere we part. I used to think of you, dear Edith, with the same kind of feelings which I feel for sister Josephine; but that day has passed. I do not ask a sister's love, I ask more. Young as you are, Edith, you are all the world to me; and when I ask my heart if I can be satisfied with sisterly affection, it answers,

no. May I hope for a nearer and a dearer place in your affections?"

"Gerald, I am scarcely more than a child; and yet I know that none can ever occupy the place in my heart which has always been yours, and which no time can ever alter. You are much more likely to change than I."

"Here, Edith, under this old elm tree, in sight of this glorious scene, where the Creator seems smiling upon us, let us promise to love each other as long as life lasts; you shall be my dearest, loveliest Edith—my strong, yet gentle adviser; and I will be to you an unchanging and devoted friend."

"It needs no promise, Gerald, on my part," replied Edith; "for every walk and tree around Ravenswood speaks to me of Gerald. But you must acquaint my parents with this conversation, for we ought not to hold intercourse of this kind, without their knowledge."

"When I am gone, Edith, will you visit this old elm tree, and think of Gerald?"

"I can certainly promise that," replied Edith; "for I am not one that can forget my friends."

They returned to the house slowly and thoughtfully. Their relations were changed; and Edith, young as she was, felt that henceforth the name and happiness of Gerald Fortescue were indissolubly blended with her own. They were both very thoughtful; and Gerald sought an opportunity that evening of speaking to Mr. Clifford. He was not surprised, but, although he highly esteemed the young man, and approved of the connection, he would not consent to bind either by any engagement while both were yet so young; but placing no barrier in the way of their affection, he tacitly sanctioned the present state of affairs.

Mrs. Clifford, believing that a pure affection is a source of great happiness, and, under proper restraints, not forbidden, but, on the contrary, pronounced blessed in the Bible, was pleased that two whom she loved so much, should so tenderly love each other.

Edith retired to her room that night, feeling that she was

a different creature; her thoughts were of Gerald and the future. Henceforth, with a nature strong as Edith Clifford's, there could be no change; her all of earthly happiness once embarked in one human heart, solemn should be the guardianship of such a secret trust. She meditated long, and prayed fervently for God's blessing on herself and Gerald, and closed her eyes dreaming of the happy future. At early dawn she arose to hail the rising sun. It was one of the most brilliant days of that lovely season. As she sat at the window, looking on the beautiful landscape, the pictures of the lovely spring morning without were not more enchanting than those within the young heart; and the smiles which lit up her sweet face spoke of love, and trust, and hope. After her morning devotions, she descended to the breakfast-room, the very picture of radiant joy and youthful happiness. Soon after breakfast, the young men come over to bid farewell to their friends; and as Frank was to accompany them to college, it added much to the sorrow of their parting hour. Edith and Madge were especially sad; for, after a stay much prolonged by little Lilly's illness, they felt the blank which the absence of the young men would bring more keenly. Josephine had come over to Ravenswood with the young men to see the last of Gerald; for, masculine as she desired to appear, if there was any object on earth whom she nearly idolized, it was her brother Gerald.

During the young men's stay at Oak Hall, Josephine had been deeply engaged in a new study—and that was the interesting character of Ralph Cameron. She had seen but few of the other sex; her gentle, poetic brother, Gerald, and the sportive, impetuous Frank, had been the only ones whom she had known intimately; but here was a youth of an entirely different stamp. His mind was of the highest order, and his education thorough. Independent in all his actions, he seemed born to command. Josephine, for once, acknowledged the presence of a superior, and involuntarily yielded him her respect. One thing, however, puzzled her: with all his strength, his piety was a subject of the greatest wonder. She could not see how it was possible, that a mind like his should bow itself down at

the shrine of what she deemed superstition. Fearless in the expression of her ultra sentiments, in the presence of Ralph she was abashed, and several times detected herself in endeavoring to conceal her real thoughts from him, for fear of losing his good opinion. When alone, she would take herself to task for her weakness, and resolve that she would not be so governed by so young a man—but it was all in vain; a glance of his bright eye, the clear, decided tone of his voice, when expressing with manly boldness his noble sentiments, were enough to dissipate all her boasted courage and independence.

“Could it be possible,” she would ask herself, “that she, the proud, boastful Josephine Fortescue, was really afraid of Ralph Cameron?” Then again, when she saw his kind devotion to little Madge Clifford, an unattractive child, she would sometimes detect herself in wishing the child far away. She saw her talents, but she could not imagine what Ralph saw in her, to draw his attention constantly away from herself. She had never seen any one with half the strength of Ralph’s character, and yet with all his power, his goodness led him to devote himself to this little girl; certainly with no other desire than to do her good.

Could she only hope to be the friend of Ralph Cameron, she felt as if he would improve her character, and yet the thought was instantly hushed. These reveries had frequently disturbed her; what could it mean? And now in the day of parting, when Ralph was to leave them, “why should she feel so sad?” His whole attention was given to Madge; and while she felt that she would have sacrificed much to gain his friendship, she realized that a homely, perverse little girl had supplanted her. As thoughts like these passed through her mind, she was standing leaning near the window. Ralph approached her, and extending his hand in a friendly manner, said, “Farewell, Miss Fortescue. You will remember what I have said to you concerning the things of another world.”

With more humility than she had ever felt before, she replied, “I will endeavor to do so.”

She turned away to hide her emotion, for she was too proud

to show to others that deep interest which she painfully realized, she felt in Ralph Cameron. Though aiming to be in all respects a strong-minded woman, Josephine Fortescue had discovered that she possessed a woman's heart. The carriage was standing at the door to convey them away. Gerald, with a tearful countenance, wrung Edith's hand; Ralph whispered some kind parting words to Madge, and Frank, whose warm heart was really full of grief, to hide his emotions, was giving his parting injunctions with an air of lightness which he did not feel.

"Farewell, Edith! Good-by, Madge! You'll be glad when I am gone. Now don't say that you are sorry, for I cannot believe you. You must all write me family letters."

The mother drew her only son down close to her, and while she whispered earnest, parting words, he could no longer hide the tears which burst from his eyes, and streamed down his cheek. Drawing his cap down over his face, he hastily entered the carriage, and in another minute, the caps waving from the carriage windows, until it passed out of the avenue, told that they were gone. Mrs. Clifford sent for Edith to come to her room after their departure, and with a mother's warm and tender affection, counselled her sweet daughter with regard to her new relations.

"I would guard you, Edith, against building too much upon earthly happiness, for I know more of life than you do. Do not allow yourself to dwell too much upon thoughts of Gerald, or to expect too much from man; yours is a strong, deep nature; he is different, he is more of the dreamy and imaginative, and may not be capable of the strong enduring love which you can bestow; love God supremely, and all earthly objects in entire subjection to His will."

"Thank you, dear mamma, for your kind advice. I am not a love-sick girl, but hope that I shall be just as anxious to perform my duties and improve my mind as ever, for now I have a new motive in my desire to prepare myself for future relations in life; but, mamma, I cannot conceal from you or myself, that should I be disappointed in my estimate of Gerald

Fortescue, for this life I should be shipwrecked ; for should I for one moment see that his affection for me was on the decline, I would instantly restore him his liberty, though my own peace should be the sacrifice." Mrs. Clifford looked with admiration, mingled with trembling, on the proud expression of Edith's countenance, as she uttered these words, and they sank deep into the mother's heart. After Gerald's departure, Edith returned with her usual interest to her studies, for her character was too well disciplined to allow her to waste her time on mere reveries.

After the duties of the day, she frequently repaired to the trysting tree, where she had promised to remember Gerald ; there she frequently perused his letters, which came regularly, filled with expressions of devotion, and often asking for her advice upon subjects of interest.

Poor little Madge soon sank back again into her old habits of silence and gloom ; deprived of Ralph Cameron, she repelled all others, and simply performed her duties, and attended to her studies, because he had laid down a plan for her, which she most faithfully adhered to. To little Lilly alone, she was affectionate ; regarding her as the victim of her unkindness, she sought, by every means, to render her life less lonely and sorrowful. Towards Blanche and Adele she was still morose and envious ; they tried to make her believe that they could love her, but all in vain.

Madge idolized the beautiful, and coveted its possession for herself with such intense longing, that she still regarded the exceeding loveliness of Blanche Clifford with bitter envy ; and forgetting that she might be just as much beloved for moral beauty, she pined after the unattainable, and neglected that which was ever within her reach.

Adele's sportive, sparkling nature was equally an object of envy, for Madge saw that everywhere she was welcome, and that her silvery laugh and merry jokes were the life of every circle where she moved.

Miss Arnold was sadly tried when she saw a return of the old infirmities, but wisely she refrained from making them too

much the subject of remark ; she instructed faithfully, prayed earnestly, and observed that whenever Madge received a letter from Ralph, for days its effect was visible in the efforts which she made to overcome her faults, and improve her character ; but suddenly some temptation would arise, and Madge would be again overcome, and for weeks the fit of sullen gloomy despair would follow.

Edith's fine character and noble intellect daily strengthened ; but still there was the one root of bitterness which often strained her best performances ; there was yet lacking the one thing needful—that “ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,” without which all else is comparatively valueless. She was conscientious, truthful, high-minded ; but the heart was not yet wholly given to the Lord Jesus, to be his alone, and moulded after his holy image.

Blanche gave promise of much sweetness and innocence of character, but her principles were feeble. She was easily influenced by others. The present society was the mould of her spirit ; and her watchful friends feared that this vacillating, feeble character might prove a serious hindrance to all moral excellence. She venerated Edith, and looked up to her with almost as much reverence as she felt for her mother. So great was her desire to please everybody, that her efforts frequently brought her to the very borders of falsehood ; and her watchful governess carefully instructed her, and endeavored to guard this weak point of her character. Blanche feared Miss Arnold, because she felt that she fully understood her character. Not so with Adele ; frank almost to bluntness, her perfect transparency was her chief charm ; but her giddiness often brought her into difficulty. So great was her mirthfulness, and so keen her sense of the ludicrous, that Miss Arnold feared that she would make many enemies in her path through life, and endeavored to restrain and guide her merry, thoughtless little pupil. There was one redeeming quality, and that was her warm, affectionate heart ; through that channel, which was ever open to those she loved, there was always free access to the conscience of Adele Clifford.



CHAPTER VI.

CITY COUSINS.

IN consequence of living in the country, the children had not many associates, nor did they feel the need of society, for their own family circle was a happy one, and the means provided for their recreation, as well as their instruction, was abundant. There were a few neighboring families only, whose acquaintance Mrs. Clifford cultivated. She had one sister in New York, Mrs. Morris, who had two daughters,—the elder, Sophy; the younger, Eleanor. The mother was a lady of high fashion, entirely devoted to the vanities of the world. Her children, of course, were educated in an artificial manner, and were taught that fashionable education, fashionable society, and fashionable dress, were the only things worth attending to. She did not often visit Mrs. Clifford, for they had no sympathies in common; but as she had heard sad accounts of her sister's declining health, she wrote that she and her daughters would pay a visit to Ravenswood.

Mrs. Clifford answered the letters, stating that she would be glad to see her, and that the carriage would be in readiness to meet them at the landing, at the time appointed; but she dreaded the power of their example upon Blanche and Adele. Edith she believed far above their influence.

On the following evening, as the guests were expected, the

children were all arrayed in simple dresses, with neat silk aprons, to meet their fashionable cousins,—one fourteen; the other twelve years old. When the carriage drove up, Mrs. Morris, dressed in the very highest fashion, descended with some difficulty, for her enormous hoops and heavy flounces filled up the seat of the carriage. The two children were equally loaded with dress; and when they entered the drawing-room, with their mincing step, hands crossed in front, and heads thrown back, Adele could scarcely restrain her disposition to laugh, they reminded her so much of caricatures which she had seen in the print-windows of New York. Blanche was rather more impressed by their self-important manners. Edith was too polite ever to forget the courtesy of a lady; and Madge was too demonstrative to affect anything more than she really felt. Mrs. Clifford received her sister affectionately, and they were all shown up to their rooms to prepare for tea.

After they had left the room, Adele sprang from her seat, folded her hands, threw back her head, and commenced mimicking their walk. Blanche could not help laughing.

"Did you ever see such frights?" said Adele.

"Why, Adele, their dresses are elegant," replied Blanche; "that silk must have cost a great deal of money; and their bonnets are superb."

"I don't believe that they could run to save their lives. I should like to see them climb a fence, with their high-heeled boots, their flounces, and their hoops," said Adele. "I am going to have some fun with them, mind I tell you."

"Take care, Adele," replied Blanche; "mamma will be displeased if you make fun of your cousins."

"Oh, I won't do any harm—just a little fun," answered Adele.

Madge, who overheard the talk, said, "I do not think that they are worth anybody's notice; they are a pair of affected simpletons, and I am not going to put myself out for them."

When the tea-bell rang, the guests swept into the room in full dress, and the young ladies now appeared in thin muslin,

with low neck and short sleeves, and a profusion of elegant jewelry.

By the side of Mrs. Clifford's group of natural children, so simply educated, and arrayed in such a plain and childish manner, they presented a strong contrast, and evidently looked down upon their country cousins with much contempt. The children brought out a variety of games, and endeavored to amuse them; but they seemed to have no taste for any such. In historical games they betrayed profound ignorance, and others were too childish. When asked to favor her cousins with some music, Miss Sophy, with an affected manner, proceeded to the piano, and moving the stool far away, seated herself at a distance, stooping over from her waist, in a most ridiculous position, while, raising her hands with a sudden jump to a great height, and then, running her fingers over the keys in a dashing, furious manner, she thought that she was making a great impression; but when she commenced singing from an Italian opera, throwing up her eyes, shrugging her shoulders, and lisping out in one minute soft, languishing tones, and then screaming at the top of her voice most unmusical notes, and finally dying away in long untimed trills and shakes, Adele could scarcely restrain loud laughter; if her sisters glanced towards her for an instant, her languishing looks, and absurd faces, the quick imitation of Sophy's attitude, when none observed her but her sisters, were irresistibly comic, and every moment they feared a loud explosion. Madge looked on contemptuously. Blanche was somewhat overawed, as she supposed that this was singing of the highest order. After this grand performance, there was another pause, and the children could not imagine what to do next. The young ladies began to yawn, as if tired of their companions.

"How do you amuse yourselves in New York?" asked Blanche.

"When we have company, we always invite some boys, and then we dance all the evening. I cannot imagine how you amuse yourselves without dancing."

"Don't you ever waltz with little girls?" said Adele.

"Yes; but we don't care for such dancing, there is no fun in that."

"If you will play for us, we will show you how we waltz," said Sophy.

Blanche sat down to the piano, and while she played the girls fluttered and swam about the room in the latest approved style, thinking that they were astonishing their country cousins. Adele was almost convulsed with laughter, and longed to show off the performance of the evening.

After they retired, Adele threw up her hands, and, laughing immoderately, said :

"And these are the fine ladies of New York! I hope I'll never be a lady."

Next morning, in compliment to their guests, Miss Arnold gave a holiday; and soon after breakfast, the girls invited their guests to take a walk. Attired in elegant, expensive dresses, with delicate, high-heeled boots, and fancy bonnets, the young girls met their cousins, arrayed in suitable style for a walk in the country. Adele, in high glee, led them first through the garden, and then across the fields to a neighboring wood. When they reached the field, there were a number of cows grazing, and the city belles were dreadfully frightened when they saw the animals look towards them. Sophy shook her parasol at them, and ran as fast as her long dress would allow her; but when she perceived that a cow was pursuing her, she screamed with terror, and ran towards the fence.

"How shall I get over?"

"I'll show you," said Adele, as with one foot on the rails, in her short dress, in a minute she was over on the other side, where she stood laughing at Sophy's embarrassment.

"I never climbed a fence in my life, and I shall ruin my dress if I attempt it," said Sophy.

"You had better try, Sophy, the cow is coming fast," answered thoughtless Adele.

After many awkward efforts, she succeeded in rolling over the fence; but her flounces were ripped off, and her delicate

boot was torn. Adele could not keep from laughing, as she saw the harmless old cow standing at the fence, looking on demurely at the mischief she had done.

"Do let us go home," said Sophy, "I am sick of walking in the country."

Adele, thinking that she had enjoyed enough fun for one day, consented.

Miss Arnold reproved her for leading the young ladies through the fields, for she strongly suspected that it was done purposely for sport. It was certainly very rude treatment of a guest, but Adele thoughtlessly followed her inclinations. The girls seemed offended, for they began to suspect Adele's agency. When they returned, they retired to their own room, to repair the mischief which had been done, and Blanche and Adele ran up to the school-room.

"Come, Blanche, play me a waltz, I want to practice," said Adele, and seizing little Lilly by the waist, she flew off into a most ludicrous caricature of the waltz of the evening before. With her head thrown on one side, her eyes bent affectedly down on the floor, and her languishing attitudes, it was a perfect imitation of what she had witnessed, only somewhat exaggerated. Then she flew to the piano, and dragging out the stool, seated herself in imitation of Miss Sophy; and then throwing up her eyes, and imitating the fingering, or rather the hammering, she commenced an Italian opera, with sounds resembling words, lisping, screaming, and quivering in a perfect agony. Blanche could not restrain her laughter; even Madge was led to join the sport; and Miss Arnold, who had witnessed all the performance, could scarcely command herself enough to reprove the child for her want of hospitality.

"Adele, have you not forgotten that Sophy is your guest?" said Miss Arnold.

"No, I have not; she does not see me, and it can do her no harm," answered Adele, in self-defence.

"It is wrong, Adele, because it is a violation of that golden rule, which should regulate all our actions; it is not doing as

you would be done by; and then, Adele, her folly is not all her fault: her mother is chiefly to blame, and I am inclined to think that if she had proper influence exerted over her, she might make a fine woman."

"I cannot help laughing, Miss Arnold, it looks so funny to see such a young girl trying to act like a woman."

Blanche was much more impressed by a sense of their consequence, and when alone with the girls, expressed her sorrow at her unfashionable education.

"Mamma, has such strange notions, she seems to forget who we are, and is just bringing us up as plainly as farmers' daughters."

Blanche blushed as she said this, for she knew that all the accomplishments and refinements of life were allowed, provided they did not interfere with Mrs. Clifford's ideas of consistency. Blanche was very fond of dress, and often felt discontented with her simple attire, especially since she had seen her aunt's mode of dressing her children. Sophy and Eleanor took great pleasure in showing her all their finery and jewelry, and told Blanche that they hoped their Aunt Clifford would let them come and pay them a visit; she should then see New York life.

Mrs. Morris frequently expostulated with Mrs. Clifford about her modes of education.

"What do you intend your children for, Mary? Do you forget that they are Ravenswoods?" said Mrs. Morris.

"I do not, my sister; nor do I forget that they are God's children in one sense, given up to his service in Christian baptism; and endeavoring by God's help to keep my vow, I am training them for usefulness here, and for heaven hereafter."

"What will you do with them when it is time to bring them out?" asked Mrs. Morris.

"Bring them out, where? Into the gay world? If that is what you mean, Ellen, I shall never bring them out; it is my constant care to keep them aloof from the enchantments of a worldly life," was Mrs. Clifford's consistent answer.

"Whom do you suppose that they will marry?" asked her sister.

"That will be answered by a wise Providence, Ellen. I will endeavor to do my duty, and bring them up for that station of life in which God has placed them; if he designs them for heads of families, he will provide companions; and if not, they can be useful and happy too, without an establishment, for that seems to be the great idea now among fashionables of the sacred institution of marriage."

After an intermission of a day or two from their studies, Miss Arnold assembled her young charge again in their school-room, and inviting Sophy and Eleanor to join them, she saw by their lively interest in the instructions which she gave that they were two fine girls, spoiled by a false education.

"Mamma, I am really ashamed of my ignorance," said Sophy, to her mother; "there are Madge and Blanche, and even Adele, who have more knowledge of the world around them, than all that I have ever heard in my whole life; they talked to Miss Arnold to-day about the old kings and their courts, as if they had really visited their ancient kingdoms. She was reviewing their lessons to-day, and their knowledge of their own country is enough to shame half of the girls in Mad. La Gree's academy; they write beautiful letters, speak French, and draw exquisitely, and I shall never have such a high opinion again of a French boarding-school, since I have seen Miss Arnold's school-room."

Mrs. Morris was struck by Sophy's remarks, but still she mentally resolved that her children should be educated in a manner worthy of the old Ravenswoods, and though she saw that in all that was solid and excellent her sister's modes were far superior, yet she was willing to sacrifice all to the shrine of fashionable worldliness.

After spending a few weeks with Mrs. Clifford, Mrs. Morris prepared to return to New York, in order to make ready for a jaunt to Saratoga, where she usually spent part of her summer. The girls had become attached to their cousins, and were really sorry to leave the pleasant home of Ravenswood, for the busy, bustling life of New York, even in the Fifth Avenue. Blanche

and Adele had rattled on about Frank, and Gerald, and Ralph, until the girls were curious to see those wonderful young men, and were sorry that they had not delayed their visit until vacation.

The sisters parted sadly, Mrs. Clifford mourning over the worldliness of her sister, and Mrs. Morris impressed with a conviction that her sister Mary was hastening rapidly to that "bourne from whence no traveller returns."



CHAPTER VII.

THE TWO PASTORS.



SEVERAL miles from Ravenswood lay the pleasant village of N——, where several churches of different denominations were located, and where persons living in the country generally attended. Mrs. Clifford was an Episcopalian, and from her youth had been a communicant in that church; her family, consequently, had been reared in their mother's faith.

In its early history, the rectors of St. John's had been good, useful men, who loved their own church, valued its services, but who preached Jesus Christ and him crucified, as the sinner's only hope. But after the publication of the "Tracts for the Times," in America, novelties appeared in many of the churches in the State of New York; and the rector of St. John's, the Rev. Mr. Singleton, became deeply affected with the new doctrines, claiming for them great antiquity. He was a dangerous teacher of error, for he was a man of talent and eloquence, with popular manners, and very devoted and exemplary in his daily life. He had always been upon terms of close intimacy with the Clifford family, and esteemed the mother of the household, as one of the most lovely and pious members of St. John's.

Gradually the change in his sentiments appeared. His preaching, formerly of a plain, practical character, though

never very decided in its tone, now taught a mystical theology: baptismal regeneration; sacramental union with Christ; a rigid adherence to forms and ceremonies; the keeping of saints' days; quoting more from the fathers than from the word of God: all these were sadly significant of what must follow. The study of ancient ecclesiology; the fashion of ancient vestment, and long-exploded practices; the burning of candles; the decorations of flowers, and the introduction of ancient symbols among the ornaments of the church, were allowed to occupy too much of the time and attention of one in charge of immortal souls.

With a heart beguiled from the simplicity that there is in the gospel, he began to urge the vestry to remodel the church; greatly to enlarge the chancel; to build an altar after the ancient model; talked of chanting the service; performed singular genuflections during public worship, much of which he conducted with his back to the people; and on communion days elevated the paten containing the bread, then bowing lowly before it, placed it on what he now called the altar, but which our fathers, for hundreds of years, had known always as the simple communion table.

As introductory to the new order of things, he preached much about the ancient usages of the Church; undertook to explain the spiritual meaning of all the trifles which he wished to introduce into the solemn worship of Almighty God. This pained the pious heart of Mrs. Clifford: for since she had known the preciousness that she had found in her Redeemer, she could never be satisfied with husks of man's devising; she thirsted for the bread of life, and sometimes wondered where she could find the green pastures and the still waters of salvation. Many like herself were sadly disquieted, and were earnestly praying for direction, in this state of affairs.

About this time, a notice was given of an approaching confirmation, and Mr. Singleton urged attendance upon the rite of all who had reached the age of fourteen, without any explanation of spiritual qualifications: and seemed to regard the service as binding upon all who had literally, not spiritually,

complied with the conditions of the Prayer Book ; urging its participation upon all who could say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, without laying any stress upon that passage, which adds most significantly, "and are *sufficiently* instructed in the others parts of the Church Catechism, set forth for that purpose."

Miss Barton, a young lady entirely under the influence of Mr. Singleton, was the Sunday-school teacher of Edith Clifford, who was at that time about fourteen. Believing that through the channels of the Church only and infallibly, salvation could visit the heart, she urged upon the members of her class, and Edith among the rest, to come forward to the solemn rite. The young girl had many serious thoughts ; she wished to be a true child of God, but although not spiritually renewed, she had enough light to fear that she was not a proper subject for the rite : but when urged by Miss Barton, and also by Mr. Singleton, she thought that she must conform to the regulations of the Church, and at last visited Mr. Singleton, with reference to the matter.

She went to his study, with many misgivings, expecting to be questioned very closely as to the state of her heart before God ; but when he simply asked her if she knew the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, she came away infinitely more sad than when she first went, wondering whether something more was not implied in the ratification of the baptismal vow ; but urged by her pastor and her Sunday-school teacher, she gave in her name as a candidate. Her mother and Miss Arnold, looking upon Edith as exceedingly conscientious, thought that she would not take upon herself solemn vows without striving to keep them, and therefore offered no opposition. Edith's perplexity increased ; the more that she studied the engagements assumed, the more she feared her unfitness ; she prayed for guidance, but she was still comparatively unenlightened. The time rolled around, until at last the eventful day arrived. Early in the morning she arose, and taking her Prayer Book, read the vows once more. They pressed upon her conscience with the weight of a mountain.

She felt, as she examined them, that none but a true Christian could keep such solemn vows.

Was she, then, a real heart-changed Christian? Had she truly repented of all her heart-sins, as well as those of her life? Was she really trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ? Had she renounced the vain pomps and vanities of this wicked world? Her heart trembled as she pondered over these solemn questions; she feared to take these vows upon her soul. Her agitation was so great, that, sick and faint, she was unable to dress, and went back to her bed. Several times she arose, and was wholly unable to prepare in time for church. When the period had passed, she recovered her usual feelings, and ever after was thankful to her Heavenly Father for what she always regarded as his interference, in preventing her from assuming a false vow.

A large number was confirmed on that day, but Edith Clifford was not among them; many, urged by injudicious friends, had taken vows which they never meant to keep. The Church was multiplied, but not edified, by such additions. When Mr. Singleton called upon Mrs. Clifford, she expressed her views candidly and affectionately, and was extremely grieved at his open expressions of what she esteemed as fundamental error. He called her views, when applied to doctrine, Methodistical; and to practice, Puritanical. She was deeply pained that the Church which she loved so intensely, should have such an expositor of its blessed doctrines and services; and sometimes wondered how the martyrs of ancient days would esteem these modern sons.

The ministrations in the sanctuary became at last so offensive, that a number considered that it would be an improper exercise of charity to continue any longer in such a barren vineyard; they remembered that while the charity of the Gospel is long-suffering and kind, at the same time it "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

Deliberately, prayerfully, and in the fear of God, they withdrew from old St. John's, the church which they had loved so long, and formed a new organization of their own, calling it St. Paul's.

About thirty families joined the new congregation, and called a pastor, whom several had heard preach frequently in New York, and in their own village,—the Rev. Mr. Berkely. He was person eminently qualified for the station which he filled, for while he was an uncompromising preacher of the simple truth as it is in Jesus, his character was so lovely and Christ-like, that he was the very one fitted to bear the storms of opposition.

Having no church to worship in when he first came among them, they met in a public hall; and though not surrounded by the impressiveness of a sanctuary dedicated to the worship of God, and used for that alone, when he first appeared in the desk, there was such an air of deep solemnity about the pale, intellectual-looking man, who stood before them as their pastor, that all eyes were fixed upon him, and all hearts impressed by his appearance alone. But when he raised his clear voice, and said, in thrilling tones, "The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him," there was a solemn stillness in that audience, that might better be felt than described.

He was a man of about forty, with a pale, gray eye, high, broad forehead, and large mouth, about which, at times, there played an expression of peculiar sweetness; his thin, gray hair lay in long locks about his head; his figure was slight in the extreme, and his step, as he quietly moved about, indicated delicate health. When he addressed his new charge, laying aside all the ceremony of recent acquaintance, he appealed to them, as members of the Redeemer's flock, whom he loved for Jesus' sake, and when he announced the principles by which he hoped to be governed, he begged their co-operation and their prayers. Making no allusion whatever to the church which they had left, in his prayer he remembered all who named the name of Christ, and prayed that all might be guided into truth.

Having suffered the evils of spiritual starvation so long, the people were so thankful for the indications of God's favor, that they took hold of the new enterprise with great energy and

simplicity of heart, and in a few months had the pleasure of taking possession of a new and beautiful church, where every accommodation was provided for a useful evangelical congregation.

Mr. Berkely proved to be a pastor after the model of the New Testament, not only in the pulpit, but from house to house, and everywhere "teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God;" his labors were greatly blessed, and quickly he gathered around him an interesting flock, devoted to good works, and daily adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour.

While he loved his own Church, he loved Christ, which it set forth, still better; while he revered its forms, he could worship his Creator at suitable times, without them; while he loved especially the brethren of his own household, his large, warm heart throbbed strongly towards all others who bore the image of his Redeemer. Justification by faith in a crucified Saviour, sanctification by the Holy Spirit, the need of a holy life, the use of means of grace for the renewed soul, and subjects of practical piety, formed the burden of his preaching. He soon became warmly attached to the Clifford family, and none were more welcome at the hospitable mansion than the good Mr. Berkely.

When he first took charge of the parish, and heard the story of Edith's delayed confirmation, he was greatly interested, and his warmest Christian sympathies enlisted in her behalf, for he saw in her conscientiousness indications of the teachings of the blessed Spirit, which he doubted not would bring forth fruit unto everlasting life. What he aimed at was not simply to bring his young people forward to confirmation, but to prepare them for that solemn rite, by endeavoring to lead them to Jesus as their Saviour first, and then to the Church as their sheltering home afterwards. He loved the lambs of his flock, and when the young Cliffords saw his little carriage driving up the avenue at Ravenswood, many a time a joyous group might be seen running down the path to meet the good pastor, calling out, "Mamma, mamma, here comes dear Mr. Berkely."

No sooner would he drive up, than all clustered around him to receive his kind salutations and his pleasant smiles. One would seize his hat, another his whip, a third a bundle of books, perhaps; and little blind Lilly always contrived to get possession of the pastor's hand, who would gently lead her into the house. Seated in the library, on the good man's knee, while he patted her affectionately on the cheek, Lilly was a happy little girl; putting his hand in his pocket, he would draw out some nice fruit, or a bon-bon for the blind child; and a few tracts or children's papers would make the rest equally happy. Even Madge loved good Mr. Berkely, for nothing but kind words ever passed his lips when speaking to her.

Since the congregation had separated from Mr. Singleton, it had been more than two years, and brings us now to the period when Edith is more than seventeen. During these two years, Mr. Berkely had faithfully instructed and prayed for Edith; he had watched with great interest the development of her character, and hoped that divine grace was operating on her young heart. He saw her failing, which was excessive pride, not of rank, or station, or beauty, or talent,—for she possessed them all—but pride of character; this, he well knew, must be brought into subjection, ere she could really become a true disciple of the meek and lowly Saviour. He watched over her with a father's tender care, instructed, guided, prayed for her and with her, and was daily cheered by the evidences which she gave of tenderness of conscience, increasing humility, penitence for sin, and simple faith in Jesus.

One Sunday morning a notice was given that in six weeks the Bishop of the Diocese would hold a confirmation in the Parish of St. Paul's. All who had any interest in the subject of personal religion were invited to meet their pastor for private counsel and prayer. Edith listened with a deeply solemnized spirit. It was her most earnest desire to dedicate herself openly to the service of God. She acknowledged the claims of her Saviour, and felt now, though with deep humility, that she could assume these solemn obligations, and by God's help

she trusted that she could endeavor to perform her vows. She inwardly resolved to seek Mr. Berkely. On Monday morning, having obtained the approbation of Miss Arnold, and the blessing of her dear mother, as she pressed her to her heart with a warm kiss, she rode over to N——, a distance of a few miles.

On entering the study, Mr. Berkely arose, and taking her hand, led her to a seat, saying, kindly, "I have been expecting you, Edith, though I have purposely avoided speaking to you, especially on the subject which I hope has brought you."

"I have come with a trembling heart, Mr. Berkely, to ask your opinion concerning the step which I wish to take. When the Bishop's notice was read yesterday, I seemed to hear a voice saying to me, 'The Master is come and calleth for thee,' and I can no longer delay. I believe that I am called to follow Jesus. If I know my own heart, I have repented truly of my sins past, and trust only in Jesus for salvation."

"How long have you been thinking of this step, Edith?" asked the pastor.

"For a long time; indeed, ever since I was urged by Miss Barton to take the step. I am truly grateful to my Heavenly Father that I was prevented then, for I believe that I was wholly unprepared."

"Do you feel prepared to renounce the world and its vanities, and to bear the cross after your Redeemer?"

"By God's help, I trust that I am willing," answered Edith.

"What evidences have you of having passed from death unto life, Edith?"

"I love the things which I once hated, and hate what once I loved. I love my Bible, prayer, God's day, God's people. I prefer God's will to mine, and am anxious to bring all my powers into entire subjection to his holy laws," answered Edith.

"What are your feelings towards the Lord Jesus Christ?"

"I trust in him wholly for salvation. I love his holy, heavenly character. I desire to be like him, and to live with him forever."

"I trust that I can bid you welcome, my dear child, as a sincere follower of the blessed Saviour. None but the Holy Spirit could have produced these feelings; and having commenced the work of grace in your heart, I trust that he will bring you home in safety to his everlasting kingdom. Come to me, at all times, my child, in all your hours of weakness and temptation, and I will endeavor to show you the path of duty and of peace." Then kneeling down, he fervently commended the case of the young Christian to the Good Shepherd, and placing in her hand a copy of the "Pastor's Testimony," he saw her kindly in the carriage which conveyed her home.

That evening she wrote to Gerald, acquainting him with her decision, and in a few days received an answer full of affection, encouraging her in her new life, and cheering her with the intelligence, that for months he had been meditating the same step, and hoped to obtain leave of absence at that time, that he might, with her, ratify his Christian vows.

On the day before Easter, Gerald arrived; and after tea the young people repaired to the old elm tree, where they had so often held sweet communion; and now their conversation was of high and holy things. Gerald confided to Edith all his feelings and desires, all his fears and hopes; and she, with a full heart, listened to the recital, for it established a new bond of sympathy between them, which they hoped would be eternal. As they walked arm-in-arm, slowly up the avenue, though the thoughts which filled their young hearts were elevating and purifying, and though their hopes were full of immortality, they had lost some of the rosy tints which illumined their first dream of earthly love, and which were mellowed, and somewhat shaded, by the anticipation of the warfare upon which they felt they were about to enter. They could not read of the Christian's armor, without feeling that there must be a Christian conflict; nor of the promises held out to tried and suffering pilgrims, under the chastenings of their Father, without looking for life's vicissitudes.

Though their journey thus far, had led them through green and shady paths, illumined by the bright sunshine, they saw

the distant shadows, subduing the brilliant hues of life's early morning; but over all, was arched the bow of Christian hope; directing all, was seen the strong wise hand of their Heavenly Father; beyond all, faith pointed to the river of life, and the everlasting union of saints with their Redeemer, and each other, in the temple of the New Jerusalem above. In the depths of Edith's strong heart, the old things of light and thoughtless youth were passing away, and the more profound emotions of love to God, and resolutions to live for his glory, were preparing her for the trials which lay before her. She loved God truly for Jesus' sake, but Gerald loved him most for Edith's.

The next morning was Easter Sunday. It was indeed a resurrection morn: all nature smiled with the promise of returning spring; and the young Christians met alone, before they went to church, and mingled their prayers together. A large congregation had gathered; the Bishop was seated in the chancel, and the good pastor conducted the services with unusual solemnity. When the time for the confirmation arrived, the hymn,

"O happy day, that stays my choice,
On thee, my Saviour, and my God."

was given out, and while singing the first verse, the candidates approached the chancel. Gerald and Edith knelt side by side, and while the Bishop laid his hands on their heads, uttering the affecting prayer, "Defend, O Lord, these thy servants, with thy heavenly grace, that they may continue thine forever," they felt as if God's blessing rested upon them in a peculiar manner, and their hearts were comforted by the thought, that henceforth they would tread the pilgrim's path together, until they reached "the everlasting kingdom." After the service they partook of the emblems of a Saviour's love, and with high and holy resolutions to live for God, they returned to their pews. The organ played sweet and solemn music as they left the church; their thoughts were of Christ and heaven; and clad with the panoply of the gospel, they went forth to the conflict. Josephine had consented to witness

the services on that Easter-day, and though still averse to religion, she was impressed by the affecting scene more than she was willing to confess, and could say but little when Gerald returned home; added to this feeling, the thought that Ralph Cameron was also a professing Christian, sealed her lips, and she forbore remarks which she might otherwise have made. On the following day, Gerald returned to college, and Edith to the faithful discharge of her new relations.

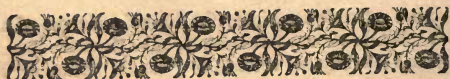
Desiring to be useful, she took charge of a class of small children in the Sunday-school, and soon became deeply interested in her work. Mrs. Clifford's health still continued delicate, often very threatening; on this account she seldom attended the house of God, but most generally remained at home with little Lilly. These Sabbath days were very happy seasons to the poor child, as then she was entirely alone with dear mamma, and enjoyed the sweet instruction that she gave. Bible stories, sweet hymns, and fervent prayer, occupied part of the morning; and then always supplied with some interesting story of youthful piety, she made the child very happy. She had been for some time employed in writing simple tales for her blind child, and these were always preferred by little Lilly, after the teaching was over.

"Now, dear mamma, one of your own beautiful stories. I do not like anything else half so well."

Not being able to go to church twice a day, Miss Arnold and Edith gathered a class of poor children from the neighborhood in the afternoon, and instructed them. They esteemed it a great privilege to be taught by the ladies of Ravenswood, and much of the good seed of the kingdom was thus scattered. Mr. Berkely encouraged Edith in her efforts, and when he could spare time, rode over to visit them, and pray for a blessing upon their labors of love. He was very fond of sacred music, and would generally stop in Mrs. Clifford's room, where Miss Arnold would favor him with some of her beautiful performances. He always had some kind word, or gracious promise to leave with Mrs. Clifford, which was as a cordial to her drooping spirit for days together.

Who can estimate too highly the blessed influence of a good pastor? While we are forbidden to give them the love which belongs to God only, we are told to "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake;" and truly we should; for is not their work a blessed employment? Co-workers with God in man's salvation; guiding the tempted, cheering the sorrowful, comforting the dying, sanctifying the nuptial tie, blessing infants in the Saviour's name, committing the dead to the silent tomb. How varied! how intense the labors of a faithful minister! How endless the demands upon his time and strength! Who needs so much of the forbearance of his people, and their faithful prayers? Could those who take pleasure in censuring their pastors only know of the demands of one single day, instead of blaming, how often would their unkind, unreasonable words be turned into prayer!

Even good Mr. Berkely knew something of these trials, and sometimes when speaking of them to a judicious friend like Mrs. Clifford, he felt that he might venture to show her a list of the demands of one day, which he had preserved as a matter of curiosity. Calls from his own parishioners, letters to write, a lecture to prepare, a funeral to attend, a society to meet, and visits to pay in distant parts of his parish; perhaps in the midst of all, suddenly called out of town, to visit a dying person,—all this repeated daily; and yet there might be found in the parish of even this laborious man, censorious spirits, who could impugn his motives, undervalue his labors, and injure his reputation by hidden insinuations, perhaps at the very minute, when he might in his private study, be bearing before the mercy-seat, the very name of the slanderer. O! that the petition, "Brethren, pray for us," might sink into the heart of all such, and turn their thoughtless censures into earnest prayer.



CHAPTER VIII.

AUNT PRISCILLA.



O COME here, Blanche! What odd-looking gig is that coming up the avenue?" said Adele, as, running to the window, they observed a large old-fashioned vehicle, perched up high in the air, moving towards the house. As it drew nearer, Adele espied a queer, antiquated-looking figure, driving; on a closer inspection, she said, "I do believe that is old Aunt Priscilla that we have heard so much about. What a bore she must be! She'll be a grand quiz for me, that's certain!"

By this time the gig had been driven up to the door, and a most remarkable-looking personage dismounted, and fastening the horse to a post, she proceeded into the house. She was tall and thin, with a sallow complexion, and an aquiline nose. She wore a pair of old-fashioned spectacles, through which peered two small, piercing black eyes. She was clad in a dark cotton dress, a large collar, and a black cloak that enveloped her whole figure. Thinking hoops very wicked articles, which would have been fined by the good old Puritans, she utterly repudiated them, fearing their effect upon her religious character almost as much as Sabbath-breaking and kindred sins, and therefore presented a peculiarly long and lank appearance. Her bonnet was large, with a deep face, something in the shape of a coal-scuttle,—of the peculiar fashion worn thirty years

before, and which, for conscience' sake, she had never altered. Over this bonnet she wore an oil-cloth covering always, in travelling; and when walking, was never seen without a blue cotton umbrella. She had large pockets in her dress, which contained a curious medley of convenient articles. In one, were her hair-brush and comb, her tooth-brush, snuff-box, spectacle-case, large purse, and a pair of glasses for out-doors. In the other, were a small pocket Testament, an old hymn book, a large knitting-bag, another bag containing candies for good children, a ball for her cat, a bundle of tracts, another of patch-work, with needle-book, scissors, thimble, etc.

With an umbrella in her hand, she rang the bell; and when Uncle Peter made his appearance, she asked for Mrs. Clifford; and altogether, he was much amused at the sight of the queer old lady. He showed her politely into the family-room, where Mrs. Clifford was sitting, and ran off, as quickly as he could, into the kitchen, for fear of laughing outright.

"Well, Mary, I've comed a long journey to see you, for I heerd you was sick, and I have brought a lot of my physie, which I know will do you a heap of good; but let me look at you. Well! you do look a little pale and thin, and I don't like the red spot on your cheek, nor the shiny look of your eye."

"I am glad to see you, Aunt Priscilla; you are very kind to come so many miles to see me, and I will try to make you as comfortable as I can."

With these words, Mrs. Clifford rang the bell for a servant, which was answered by the same old servant. "Uncle Peter have the horse and gig put up, belonging to this lady, and be sure to attend to the horse well before he goes into the stable: he has come a long journey."

"I will go out myself, Mary, for I have a heap of things to bring in;" and away trotted Aunt Priscilla, after old Peter.

First, her trunk was taken off the back of the carriage, then two or three handboxes, one large box of medicines, a large basket, with the lid carefully tied down, a small one,

secured also, then a cage containing a noisy parrot, then a large jar of apple-butter, and a box of fine apples. When all were carefully taken out, Aunt Priscilla, picking up the largest basket herself, took it into Mrs. Clifford's room, and on untying it, out sprang a King Charles spaniel, who frisked and frolicked around his mistress as if delighted to regain his liberty. "Go speak to the lady, Snip," said Aunt Priscilla; and away went Snip, on his hind legs, to salute Mrs. Clifford, who took the little paw, and received in return a gracious kiss upon her hand. On opening the second basket, a large cat made its appearance. "This is Uncle Toby, Mary. You have no idea what a smart thing it is. I could not leave the poor things at home, they'd a grieved themselves to death away from me, so wherever I goes, Snip and Toby always follow; then Polly must come too,—so here are my three pets. I takes care of all myself; all I want is some cream for their breakfast, and something nice for their dinner. They sleep in my room, and I won't let them trouble you."

At this moment Edith entered the room.

"Which one is this, Mary?"

"This is my eldest daughter, Edith," replied Mrs. Clifford.

"What did you say, honey? I can't hear you; I'm very deaf," said Aunt Priscilla; and Mrs. Clifford had to repeat her introduction; then addressing Edith, she said, "This is your father's aunt, my child; many a day and night has she nursed him when a baby, waited on him when a little fellow, and been a kind friend to him all his life. You will be especially attentive to Aunt Priscilla, if you wish to please your father."

Edith advanced with a pleasant manner, and allowed the old lady to kiss her affectionately, although she was far from attractive upon close contact, for she was an inveterate snuffer, and was by no means particular in keeping her face free from the offensive powder

"Well, surely, Mary, she's a nice-looking girl,—the very spit of her father. I shall love her, I know, for his sake."

"Edith, will you see Aunt Priscilla to her room? She may want to change her dress; she must be tired."

And the young girl kindly led her to a pleasant chamber, and saw all her treasures placed suitably away. She was somewhat amused on seeing the bed for Snip on one side of Aunt Priscilla's, and one for Toby on the other. Poll was hung up against the wall, and being rather tired, soon composed herself to sleep. After providing her with every comfort, Edith returned to her mother and heard her aunt's history.

She was the great-aunt of Mr. Clifford, and had lived with his mother all her married life. Never having married, she had attached herself strongly to her niece's family, and though possessed of many peculiarities, had always been kindly treated for her real worth. She had many singular notions, which she maintained with great pertinacity, was a believer in signs and omens, and had a great antipathy to the other sex, believing that all were fortune-hunters. Having lived all her days in the country, she knew nothing of the manners of city life, and esteemed everything wicked which did not accord with her own views of propriety. She had a great passion for attendance upon baptisms, weddings, and funerals, and esteemed herself much slighted if not allowed to have some directions to give on all such occasions among her neighbors. For many years, the list had been made out of persons whom she wished to attend her funeral, and where they were to walk. If one died, the name was erased; or if one offended her, the place was changed with regard to precedence, or else cut off altogether; moreover, her grave-clothes were kept constantly by her, and every spring were laid upon the grass to whiten. She had a great habit of talking to her friends about their place of interment, and often shocked the nerves of delicate persons by her rough remarks. She lived on her own little farm, surrounded by many comforts, and keeping one servant, old Sarah, who had lived with her many years. None knew exactly what Aunt Priscilla was worth, but the neighbors generally thought that she was possessed of more than she was willing to acknowledge.

With all her peculiarities, she had really a very kind and generous heart. Whenever a charitable object was on foot,

a new church to be built, a school-house erected, or a charity to be endowed, there were always some anonymous contributions, scrawled in a miserable manner, which many suspected came from Aunt Priscilla. Having retained her love for her nephew, George Clifford, she came to see him once in a great while. So long had it been that Edith had forgotten her appearance. When she presented herself at the tea-table, Adele could scarcely restrain her laughter. Dressed in a black silk gown, high-heeled shoes, and a plaited high-cornered mob-cap, and her thin lank figure, attended by Uncle Toby and Snip, she presented a ludicrous appearance.

"Who is this?" said the old lady as she looked at Blanche.

"This is my daughter Blanche," replied Mrs. Clifford.

"And sure, is that her name? Well, this is a 'perty little critter, anyhow! And this one, Mary?" as she looked at Adele.

"This is my daughter Adele, a merry little girl."

"So I should think, Mary; but she ought not to laugh at us old people, as I have seen her do this evening."

Adele blushed and turned her head away, for she could not deny the truth of what the old lady had detected.

"And this is my little Lilly, Aunt Priscilla. She is our dear pet," said Mrs. Clifford, as she led her around to the old lady.

Aunt Priscilla wiped the tears away from her eyes, as she kindly laid her aged hand on the head of the blind child, and drawing her near her, kissed her soft cheek.

It required all Mrs. Clifford's forbearance to endure some of the unpleasant habits of the old lady; for she would take snuff at the table in large pinches, and what she did not use, she would blow away, and frequently it entered the eyes and sprinkling the plates of her neighbors; and then the odor of her pocket-handkerchief was peculiarity offensive.

When the bell rang for worship, Aunt Priscilla joined fervently in the exercises, and after it was over said:

"Mary, I am glad to see that you have grace to bear the cross, and to own the Lord before your family; but I'm afeerd that George is sarving the evil one."

At bedtime Edith led the old lady to her room, helped her to undress, and kissing her affectionately, bade her good-night.

Next day, she was up betimes, and with her white muslin apron, ready for work, attended by Toby and Snip, made her way to the kitchen. The servants were alarmed at the sight of the old lady, as they did not relish the idea of so much interference; but, accustomed to a stirring life, she proposed to make herself useful; and for a commencement, mixed what she called an armlet, but so tough with flour, that no one could eat it. She pronounced the coffee too strong, and was going to weaken it, when the cook interfered, and protested against it being done. Uncle Toby and Snip were running about, thrusting their noses in everything, and Uncle Peter sat in the corner, rolling up the whites of his eyes, stuffing his mouth with his handkerchief, to stifle the laughter which shook his fat sides at the sight of the cook's indignation, her face blazing with anger, knocking about the cups and plates, and venting her spleen upon the pots and kettles. Finding the kitchen becoming too warm, Aunt Priscilla hastily took her departure, attended by her two pets, and did not soon venture into those stormy domains. Watching her opportunity, as soon as she found herself alone, she commenced her investigation of Mrs. Clifford's state of health.

"Are you troubled with a cough, Mary?" asked the old lady.

"I have been for a long time, but it does not seem to grow any worse."

Aunt Priscilla leaned her elbow on her knee, placed her thumb and finger under her nose, threw up her eyes, and said in a very solemn manner, "Humph! that's bad!" while she kept jogging her foot.

Then, she added, "Do you have night-sweats, and fever in the afternoon?"

"I used to have them more than now, but they still trouble me."

Aunt Priscilla uttered a groan, and rocked herself quickly in her chair.

"My child, you must take some of my medicines. They are all Ingin cures, and made out of yarbs; they have cured a heap of people that were further gone in consumption than you are."

"Thank you, Aunt Priscilla, but as I have a physician, I think that I ought to obey his directions."

"Well, child, I don't think much of your reg'lar bred doctors, specially in consumption. I think that they kill more than they cure. Mary, where do you 'spect to be buried? I s'pose here, at Ravenswood?" asked Aunt Priscilla. "All my plans for my burying has been made for twenty years. I think that it saves a heap of trouble for our friends," continued Aunt Priscilla.

Mrs. Clifford was much annoyed, for she knew that no subject could be more painful in her family circle than the one just broached.

In the course of the morning company called, and Aunt Priscilla, whose curiosity was always active, made her way into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Renshaw and her daughter were in conversation with Mrs. Clifford. They were fashionable ladies and looked rather surprised on seeing such a queer-looking old woman in company with their hostess. Mrs. Clifford introduced Aunt Priscilla, who came up close to her niece, and screamed out, "Who did you say, Mary? Mrs. Reindeer?"

"No, aunt, Mrs. Renshawr," calmly answered Mrs. Clifford, who saw that her guests, with all their politeness, were scarcely able to restrain their laughter.

"Oh! sure, Renshawr. I wonder if they be any kin to old John Renshawr, that used to work in my potato patch?"

By this time Mrs. Clifford began to feel very uneasy, and fearing that her old friend might meet with some rebuff, said,

"Aunt Priscilla, I think that Edith wants you to show her how to knit a tidy. She has some leisure now, and you'll find her in the school-room."

Ever ready for employment and unsuspecting she arose hastily, and hurried off to seek for Edith. Mr. Clifford was very kind to the old lady for he remembered an event which

happened many years before, when, but for her timely aid, he would have lost thousands of dollars; but, as Aunt Priscilla was staying with him at the time, she discovered the cause of his unhappiness; and early one morning, equipped in her dark cotton travelling dress, her scooped-faced bonnet, with her old blue umbrella, and mounted in her old-fashioned gig, she started off for home. On being pressed to stay she refused, saying that she would be back in a day or two. At the end of the second day, her old gig was seen slowly coming up the avenue, and Aunt Priscilla had upon her countenance a peculiar expression of satisfaction as she dismounted.

After tea, Mr. Clifford entered his library. While pondering over his troubles, and seeing no way of escape, suddenly his eye rested upon an old greasy pocket-book and a very large note, in which was scrawled, near the top of the envelope, "For my dear nevey, George Clifford." When he opened it, to his surprise, there was inclosed a check for the exact amount which he needed, and all that was written within was, "Don't ask any questions. I see you are in trouble. I can help you. You are welcome to the money. I have nothing else to do with it but to help my nabors, and specially my nevey George. This comes from Aunt Priscilla."

He had never forgotten the generous deed, and could always bear with her peculiarities (which were really sometimes very annoying), when he thought upon her real worth. Madge was rude, and often very saucy to the old lady, despised her cat and dog, and wished poor Poll sunk in the Hudson.

"Aunt Silla, Aunt Silla, Poll wants her breakfast," was the constant cry in the morning; and all day long the parrot was screaming and chattering at the very top of her voice. She was frequently brought into the dining-room, and during the dinner hour often deafened the ears of the family with her noise, and in a very short time screaming out the names of the household. Many were the mistakes made by Aunt Priscilla. On the first day that she came to the dinner-table, she observed the finger-bowls, and wondered that they should have glass bowls to drink out of. Finding the bowl filled with

water, she soon drank its contents, which Uncle Peter speedily replenished. When Adele observed her emptying it the second time, she was nearly convulsed with laughter. It was filled again, and the old lady turned innocently to Uncle Peter, declaring "that she could not drink any more." The old man got out of the room as fast as he could, for fear of laughing out loud, and Adele was shaking with suppressed merriment. When Aunt Priscilla observed the family dipping their fingers into the bowls after dinner, nothing could exceed her astonishment.

"Well, sure now, is this the fashion to wash the hands in drinking-bowls? I think it's about one of the most ungenteel ways I ever seed."

Blanche was generally polite in the presence of the old lady, for she desired the good opinion of everybody; but she would join Adele in her absence in ridiculing all her foibles, although they had both heard the story of her kindness to their father.

Aunt Priscilla was very much afraid of ridicule, and soon discovered that she was a subject of mirth to the thoughtless children. For a long time, for their parents' sake, she did not openly notice it; but at last, one day she caught Adele dressed in her bonnet, with her blue umbrella, and screaming in Blanche's ears, "What did you say? Did you see Uncle Toby? Where's my Snip?" Blanche was laughing immoderately, when in came Aunt Priscilla.

"This is fine sport for young ladies, to be sure, making fun of an old body; take care children: remember the bears that devoured the children for making game of old Elisha. I'll remember this, mind I tell you; you'll be sorry for making fun of old Aunt Priscilla, some day:" and away she went, leaving the children rather ashamed of their performance.

Edith was universally kind, and Aunt Priscilla fully appreciated it. She loved the young girl, and esteemed nothing too much trouble, if it gave her pleasure. It required a great deal of patience to answer all her questions; for, being so very deaf, she was continually asking, "What did she say? Did she speak to me?" and Edith, with real Christian patience, bore with the tiresome old lady, and tried to make her happy.

Having observed the interest which Edith manifested in her Sunday-school, Aunt Priscilla furnished her with means to purchase books, and often presented her with a five-dollar note, for additions to her own private library. She kept her eyes about her, and although apparently so ignorant, she had great discernment of character, and was deeply interested in the affairs of her nephew's family. During her stay at Ravenswood, Gerald Fortescue paid a visit home, and Aunt Priscilla soon perceived the attachment between the young people.

"Mary, I don't think Ger'ld ought to have our Edith; he's a weak youth, and I'm afeerd he'll not make her happy. She's what I call a rale fine, strong-minded girl; not wishy-washy, like half the young girls, nor like Josephine Fortescue,—for she ought to put on pantaloons right straight, and a man's hat, and set up for a man at once; but our Edith is a rale woman, and ought to marry a man that she can look up to; and it always seems to me, that Ger'ld keeps looking up to her. Now that arn't the Bible rule, and I'm afeerd it won't work well."

"They are not engaged, Aunt Priscilla," answered Mrs. Clifford.

"Well, they love each other, and that's the same thing with Edith Clifford; and, mind what I say, Mary, I'm an old body, but I havn't forgotten the days of my youth: mark my words, Edith will never love but once, and if she's disapp'inted it will pretty nigh break her heart."

"I try to leave all these things with God, Aunt Priscilla. He will direct us, if we trust in him."

"Mind I tell you, Mary, you must take good keer of Edith; she's jist for all the world like me; she'll never take to more than one. Maybe I never told you about my young days, but I'll tell you now. When I was a young gal, Jedediah Tumblestone came a courtin' me, and I thought a heap on him. He was a fine, tall young man, straight and slim as a young poplar, with eyes as blue as chany, and a skin as rosy as a piny,—they used to say his hair was too red, but howsomever, I never seed it; I called it auburn, I b'lieve that's the word.

He had a nice farm, which he owned clear of all heavy drags; but he had a mother who was mighty proud on him, and she wanted him to marry a young woman that had jist come to stay with 'em awhile. Sally Jones had a handsome property, and I had nothin' then, so she coaxed and wheedled Jeddy. I seed she was a stealin' him away from me, and I was too spirited to say a word. I used sometimes to feel as if it would break my heart right out, but my stiff sperit fatched me through, so I made up my mind what to do. Now, Mary, I was all ready to be married. I had a big chest full of bed-quilts and sheets that I made myself. I had lots of piller-cases and towels, and my wedding dress was all cut out; it was a light drab silk, stiff enough to stand all alone; but for all that, one night Jeddy came to see me, and says I, 'Jeddy, I 'spect that you like another gal more nor me. If you would rather take Sally Jones, I'm not the gal to stand in your way. I wouldn't have you, Jeddy, if your heart is with another.' Mary, do you believe it? he looked glad, and said, 'Thank'ee, Priscilla. I think, somehow, I'd rather marry Sally Jones.' My heart was in my mouth, and I was a'most choked, but he didn't see it; he never know'd it, for I kept my head up, and went to his weddin', and to the house-warmin', to make out I didn't keer. Now I've never taken to a man since, and this is jist the way Edith 'll do, and I want to save her the trouble of sperit which I had.

"Then I want to ask you another question. What do you mean to do with that Madge, Mary? She's the greatest oddity I ever seed in all my days. What will she ever be good for? She does nothing but pore over her books, and pout, and look sullen all the time. I declare, that sometimes I feel as if I could about knock her over."

"There are times, Aunt Priscilla, when Madge deeply repents of her evil tempers; and if we can only once convince her that she can be beloved, I hope much for her yet. She has the idea that every one hates her."

"Well, and there's that pretty Blanche; I'm afeerd that face of hers will bring some trouble to this house. She's as

perty as any picter of an angel that I ever seed in my life ; but I don't think that she'll ever die of a broken heart, becace I see that she always thinks like them she's with ; but she may make others feel a deal more than she desarves."

"I try, dear aunt, to bring up my children in a Christian manner. I pray much for them, and I believe that the Good Shepherd will take care of them, and bring us all home to his everlasting kingdom."

"That Adele puzzles me. She's always so brimful of fun and mischief, that I've never found out, yet, whether she has any feeling. I don't think she can have much, when she can make fun of an old body like me ; but sometimes these people that seem to be so merry, have a great deal in them that's reale and genuine. But Mary, you have a treasure in your daughter Edith : she's the light of my old eyes, and the joy of my old heart, and while I live she shall never want a friend, and when I die, she shall always have reason to remember her kindness to Aunt Priscilla."



CHAPTER IX.

A PICTURE ON THE BALCONY.



URING the summer vacation Gerald returned home ; Ralph was with him, and Frank also was at home. He had grown considerably, for a few months make a great difference in a boy. He was much improved, but was still the same sportive, teasing boy ; and after having been so long restrained, was continually in a gale of merriment among his sisters. Aunt Priscilla was a source of great amusement ; and he frequently played practical jokes upon her, that displeased his parents exceedingly.

The young people were much together. Edith paid many visits to the old elm tree, and in the sweet influence which she exerted over Gerald, commenced that gentle, holy ministry which hereafter blessed so many. Madge's icy manners and wintry aspect thawed beneath the sunshine of noble Ralph Cameron. Josephine Fortescue lost much of her arrogant, imperious manners. In the presence of Ralph she was silent and abstracted, and evidently acknowledged his superiority, and sometimes trembled under his disapproving glance. Gerald clung closely to Edith. Frank was the merry leader of every mischievous prank ; but, although exhibiting so much that was boyish and playful, Mrs. Clifford was pleased to hear from Gerald and Ralph such encouraging accounts of his standing at school, as a boy of fine talents. Blanche and

Adele were in their element; and even little Lilly partook of the general joy,—for when the boys were at home, everything was bright and happy.

One fine afternoon in summer, all had assembled in the garden at the back of the house. It was a charming spot, laid out in terraces, in which was planted a great profusion of flowers, especially every variety of the rarest and most exquisite roses. It was of great extent, with winding paths, bordered with luxuriant shrubbery. In the more distant parts there were very fine shade trees, with summer-houses, rustic-seats, and statuary adorning the most retired portions. Near the house lay the flower-garden. On either side of the mansion stood noble trees, shading the wings, and imparting a rural appearance to the spot. Gerald and Edith were seated in a distant summer-house, enjoying a favorite book, which he was reading to her. Ralph was playing a game of graces with Madge; and while she forgot herself in the exhilaration of the sport, her motions were free and airy, and her beautiful eyes danced with the delight she felt. Frank ran races with Blanche and Adele. When tired of play, the girls gathered a quantity of roses, which they made into graceful wreaths. Blanche ran off with hers up to the balcony, and in her sportiveness, she looked there the very personification of girlish beauty and grace. Running roses entwined the columns of the balcony, and woven through the lattice-work, gave it the appearance of a beautiful arbor of delicate flowers. In the midst stood the fascinating figure. She was at this time a graceful child of twelve years of age. Her deep blue eyes were shaded by long, dark eyelashes; her nose was Grecian; her rose-bud mouth expressed all the varying emotions of her heart; around it lay countless dimples; and when she smiled, her lips disclosed rows of pearly teeth. Her complexion was of that peculiar hue which indicated delicacy of constitution, yet the rosy blush which mantled her sweet face, imparted fresh charms to her lovely appearance. Her hair was of a golden brown, which hung over her snowy neck and shoulders in rich profusion. Her figure was symmetrical, even at that

early age. She was clad in a white dress, over which was thrown the wreath of roses which she had gracefully woven; in her hands she held the basket which she had brought from the garden. As she stood there, scattering her flowers upon Madge and Adele, nothing could have been more bewitching than the lovely picture. Gerald and Edith were advancing at the moment towards the balcony.

"Look, Edith!" said Gerald, "was there ever anything more charming?"

"She is charming, indeed, Gerald," answered Edith.

"Blanche, stand still for a few minutes," said Gerald, "just as you are;" and taking out his pencil and paper, he rapidly sketched the enchanting vision that stood before him.

"Have you done, Gerald?" and she kissed the lovely hand as she said, "Thank you for the picture; I shall expect it when it is done, for dear mamma."

"No, indeed, Blanche; if I am successful, I shall keep it for myself; for I shall think a great deal of my first attempt at figures. You must come over to-morrow for your first sitting. Wear the same dress. I am very anxious to get to work."

Aunt Priscilla was intently looking upon the scene, when Gerald stood sketching Blanche. She said to herself, "He'll make her as vain as a peacock; and Edith had better take heed of her. When she's a little older, with her pretty face, and winning ways, she'll steal away Ger'ld's heart—mark my words. He's a weak brother, and Edith will find it out. She'll have to go through my experience yet."

Edith chided her heart for the uncomfortable feelings that disturbed her, by Gerald's admiration of her little sister Blanche, and despised herself for the first feelings of jealousy which she had ever experienced.

"What a miserable creature I must be?" said she, "to be jealous of a little girl;" and she resolved to strangle the feeling in its very birth; and by God's help she succeeded, and cheerfully helped Blanche off next morning, to sit for her picture.

Gerald succeeded beyond his expectation, at the first sitting; but he would not let any one see the picture until it was completed. He was entirely engrossed by it, and for a time paid very short visits to Ravenswood, and really did neglect Edith for his new pursuit. Blanche was very anxious for the time to come, and always came home much delighted, and most generally with some little gift from Gerald.

Edith felt herself sadly aggrieved, but her besetting sin would not allow her to let it be seen; for, much as she suffered by Gerald's neglect, she was resolved to hide the misery, and to appear indifferent also. When he came over, after an absence of several days, Edith received him coolly, and asked him, in an indifferent way, how the picture progressed. He saw the change in her manner, and was hurt. He answered in the same tone, "Very well," and no more passed between them that evening. They were both very unhappy. Edith was ashamed of her jealous feelings, and Gerald felt that she was unjust to him; and yet neither would make advances. But Edith was too conscientious and Christian like to cherish this state of feeling. When examining the state of her heart before God, she perceived that the poison of jealousy had infused itself into her secret feelings. She knew and mourned over it as a sin against God, and under the guidance of the blessed Spirit, she cast it all away.

The next day, when Gerald came over, she received him with her usual warmth, and when she had an opportunity, said, "Forgive me, Gerald; I was unjust to you, but it has all passed away."

"I have been to blame, also, Edith; for I did not seek an explanation, but allowed the sun to go down upon our wrath," said Gerald. "What was the matter?" he continued.

"I was foolish enough, Gerald, to feel displeased at the interest which you manifested in Blanche, and though I am ashamed to tell you so, I do it to punish myself for the folly."

"You'll never feel so again, Edith, will you? Let our love for each other always be distinguished by its perfect trust,"

said Gerald. "I don't think that I could feel jealous of your affection for any one, for I do trust you so entirely."

From this time there were no more disturbances about the picture; it went on rapidly, and Edith appeared as much interested as Gerald. After the lapse of a few weeks, it was completed, and Gerald invited Edith over to see his first attempt at a portrait. It was pronounced by all a grand success. It was Blanche Clifford, in all her fascinating loveliness of that day: her smile was there, and her beautiful eyes seemed to ask for love, from all who looked upon the charming picture. The sunlight of a summer afternoon was exquisitely delineated, and increased the brilliancy of the portrait, while the sweet flowers which she seemed scattering around her, were strikingly emblematical of the bright period of her young life.

"How lovely, and yet how perfect, is the likeness, Gerald!" exclaimed Edith; "I think we may predict your future success, if this sweet picture is any indication of your talent. I wish you could visit the Continent, Gerald, it would improve you so much?"

"I hope for that pleasure some day, not very far distant; for I can think of being nothing else than an artist, and I wish for the best advantages."

The interest which Gerald felt in Blanche, seemed to be that of an affectionate brother, and she looked to him for guidance and protection from teasing Frank; for though he loved his sisters dearly, he rarely missed an opportunity for a joke.

Ralph was still an inmate of Oak Hall. He had discovered that Josephine possessed a powerful mind, but with his correct perception, he regarded her talents as all perverted, so long as she aspired to masculine pursuits. He scrupled not, as opportunity offered, to express his views, and to point out to her the more excellent ways of the Bible. She listened respectfully, not because she was convinced, but because she was deeply interested in the being who uttered these sentiments, and hoped at some future day to bring him round to her way of thinking. Before she was aware of it, she found, much to

her shame and mortification, that she had allowed Ralph Cameron to occupy a place in her affections, which she had never intended for any man. She was not only pained at the discovery, but angry with herself for yielding to such a weakness, and with Spartan firmness, resolved to punish herself for such folly. She kept aloof from Ralph, shut herself up in her own room, treated him with coldness, sometimes with rudeness, and often mortified Gerald, with the want of decorum with which she met her brother's guest. She succeeded in completely deceiving them both, for they felt that she utterly despised Ralph Cameron. Not so with Aunt Priscilla or Miss Arnold, who penetrated her disguises.

When Mrs. Clifford would regret her rudeness, Aunt Priscilla would frequently say, "She's a sassy minx, but she don't fool me. I have seen her turn her head away to brush off a tear, which would come when she saw Ralph so taken up with our Madge. She don't think how I watch her. I can see through her."

To Madge, Ralph was still the same kind brother, checking her waywardness, directing her talents, calling out her affections, and in every way endeavoring to exercise a good influence over her. One summer afternoon he had traced her footsteps to a distant arbor, very far from the house, where, seated at a little table, she was busily occupied in writing, not dreaming that any one was watching her. She had a large portfolio before her, in which lay many loose leaves. She would write a few lines, then read them out loud, stoop down, and with Indian rubber, erase words, and write again. Then she would sit silently, with her expressive eyes turned upward, as if invoking inspiration; then with a smile, as though she had caught a beautiful thought from the upper skies, she would hastily transcribe it on her sheet, and then read it again aloud. Ralph did not wish to appear as a listener, and yet his curiosity was so much aroused, that he stood apart, and listening to the singular child, he discovered that she was writing most beautiful poetry; and suddenly presenting himself at the door of the arbor, she sprang to her feet, and covered her blushing face

with both hands. When Ralph attempted to touch her portfolio, she seized it violently, and exclaimed, "Oh, Ralph, don't touch it. I am so ashamed that you should have heard me. I can't bear you to look at all my foolishness!"

Ralph seated himself quietly by her side, and taking her hand gently, he said, "Madge, am I not your friend—your brother? Won't you let me guide you in your studies?"

She burst into tears, and said, "But these are not my studies; you would not approve of them."

"Will you not let me see them, Madge? I will not chide you; I will tell you what I think of them, and perhaps I can help you even here."

Turning her face to him, she placed the portfolio in his hand, and said, "Ralph, you may take them all, but don't look at them now; I could not bear to sit near you if you do."

"Perhaps, Madge, God has endowed you with many talents; if so, they must all be used for his glory; for remember, that for all we must render up a strict account. If you will let me look into your heart, I may be able to direct you." Then turning the subject, he conversed cheerfully with the young girl for a few minutes, and rising, they walked for a long time in their favorite path, which lay along the beautiful river, in view of the most romantic scenery of the Hudson. Returning about tea-time, Madge flew up to her room to muse and wonder at the kindness of Ralph Cameron; and he, with his portfolio, retired to read over the loose leaves of the curious collection. There were many papers which were abstracts of her studies, exhibiting great clearness of thought, and intelligent remarks; others were sketches—some of character, showing great discernment, and some fancy sketches, displaying a vivid imagination. There were also some beautiful fragments of poetry; but the most curious and interesting of all was her journal, where her thoughts and feelings were freely expressed. Below, we will give a few extracts:

"Saturday.—This is a stormy day. The wind blows almost a hurricane; the river is dark and troubled; the boats are

tossing about on the high waves, and the vessels are rocking to and fro; the trees are cracking, and the branches are flying wildly about; the water-fowls are screaming in the air, and the land animals are terrified by the war of the elements, running to and fro for shelter; and yet I like it all, for sometimes I feel as if there was just such a strife in me. Why am I so different from my sisters?—they are all merriment and glee, and I am always sad. I like stormy days, wild stories, and gloomy pictures; and then it seems so beautiful when the storm is over, to watch the waves subsiding, the clouds rolling away, the sun struggling amid the murky sky, until, at last, the storm at an end, there is perfect peace. Will it be so with me? When the strife in my bosom is over, will there be peace at last? I cannot see that it will be so, for my heart is the seat of too much disorder, to hope for rest while it is unchanged.

“Sunday.—I have been to church to-day. I tried to worship God, but I could not. My heart was wandering all over the earth. I felt no penitence. I have no faith, no love to God, nor for my fellow-creatures, for they do not love me. Only Ralph loves me; and though I am so ugly and unamiable, he is always kind, and never turns away from poor Madge. May God bless him for his goodness.

“Monday.—What a dreadful day it has been! I have been perverse, passionate, disobedient. I determined that I would try to be better; but as soon as a temptation in the school-room beset me, I yielded, and fell into great sin. There is no use in my trying to be good. What can be the reason?

“Tuesday.—Miss Arnold was very gentle to-day. She never loses her patience with me, and mamma is always kind, but she does not love me as she does Edith, who is so very good, and Blanche so beautiful, and Adele so bewitching; no wonder she loves them better; but God made me as I am, and I think that they ought to remember that. I felt sullen and unhappy, and stole away to my garret, with my favorite, Shakespeare. How much he knew of the feelings of the human heart. I wonder what he would think of me? I should not wish him to draw my picture. I fear that it would have been a frowning,

homely girl, always discontented and unhappy. If St. Paul should show me my likeness, I wonder what he would write? I know that I am a strange girl, and not at all like any other. I don't know one that feels as I do. Nobody understands or pities me but Ralph; and yet he never flatters me, he always tells me truth. A word from him or a look from his eagle eye, tames my proud spirit at once.

“Wednesday.—What a bright beautiful day! All the landscape smiles, the sunbeams dance upon the beautiful Hudson, and everything seems joyous; even I feel happier to-day. Miss Arnold commended me for my lessons. She laid her hand so kindly on my head, and kissed me so affectionately as she said, ‘Madge, you have been a dear girl to-day,’ that I felt the tears come into my eyes, but I could not let her see them. Why? Am I too proud? In the evening Ralph asked me to walk on the bank of the river. I went so cheerfully, and we had such a pleasant walk. He seems to understand all about me, and said, ‘Madge, it has been a bright day, has it not?’ I knew what he meant. He did not only refer to the sky above, but to the world within. I smiled as I said, ‘How do you know it, Ralph?’ He answered, ‘I have only to look at your face, Madge, and I know all about it.’ Then he told me how I might always have peace within, if I was only a real child of God. Oh! Ralph, shall I ever be what you desire?

“Thursday.—I went into the school-room this morning with good determinations. Blanche was provoking, Adele made fun of me. I became angry, and said something very passionate. Adele turned towards me, and said, ‘Remember poor little Lilly, Madge; your temper has destroyed her happiness for life.’ Oh! the cruel speech! when I have so deeply repented of that dreadful act. It is that which has cast such a deep shadow over my whole life; and when my own sister can be so unjust, and unfeeling, what is the use of my trying to do right? I receive no encouragement, and only excite dislike. I’ll shut my heart again. It shall open to none but Ralph. I cannot pray, I feel so hardened. What is to become of me?

“Friday.—We were all in the garden this afternoon. Every-

body seemed happy; even I felt lively, for Ralph was so kind as to play graces with me: the air was so delightful, the sun so bright, and the flowers so beautiful. Blanche was full of mirth. She ran up on the balcony in her sportiveness, and there she stood in her pure white dress, decorated with a wreath of sweet roses. How lovely she looked! I thought of the bright angels when I gazed at her. Gerald was so struck, that he made her stand still, while he sketched the picture. Ralph was enraptured, and I thought, with a sigh, what a charming gift beauty is; but Ralph turned around, and reading my thoughts, said, with one of his kindest smiles, 'Blanche is beautiful to look at; but it is better to be good and holy. All cannot be beautiful, but all can love and serve God. Don't court beauty, Madge, only seek for goodness.' What can be the matter? Edith did not seem pleased with the picture on the balcony. I wonder if she is jealous? If she is tormented by this feeling, when she is so good, I need not be discouraged.

"*Saturday.*—The summer vacation is drawing to a close. Ralph will soon go away. I wonder if Josephine dislikes him. She keeps out of his way, she never speaks to him, but I think she can't dislike him. I suppose that he has spoken the truth to her, and she don't fancy that; but she must respect him. What shall I do when Ralph is gone? I'll try to do as he wishes me to. He has given me a number of rules; they are all for my good. I cannot disobey him, he is so firm and unyielding, and yet he is always so kind. What a blessing to have such a friend! and I only a little girl of fourteen. Shall I ever love God as he wishes me to do? Shall I ever overcome my evil temper, and be meek and lowly? How strange it would sound to hear it said that perverse, passionate Madge Clifford, had become an humble follower of the blessed Saviour; and yet I hope that I shall be just what he desires."

Ralph read this artless journal with feelings of deep interest. It gave him increasing insight into the inner life of Madge Clifford, and confirmed all his opinions of her character. He saw a strong mind, with an equally strong will; warm affections, and a conscience tenderly alive to sin, but yet unen-

lightened as to the means of deliverance. He also perceived talents of such a brilliant character, that he was assured, if only directed into a proper channel, would make her a noble, useful woman.

The next day he called her aside, and restored her portfolio. "Madge, the contents are sacred. I see your struggles, my child, but must remind you that in your own unassisted strength, you will find your passions always the conqueror; but if you meet them in the panoply of the Lord Jesus, you will overcome them all, and come off more than victorious. I leave you soon, my dear child, but let me beg of you, Madge, to seek for strength where it can only be found,—at the feet of our blessed Saviour. In daily communion with him, you will learn blessed lessons of humility and love, and will at last find rest for your tempted spirit."

She raised her tearful eyes to the young man's face, and said, "Thank you, Ralph, for all your goodness to me. I shall never forget it, and will try to follow your advice."

In a few days, the young men had all returned to college. Life at Ravenswood went on as usual, with the exception that Mrs. Clifford's state of health became more alarming, and her physician ordered her in the autumn to Magnolia, to try the effect of treatment and climate on her declining strength.



CHAPTER X.

THE FAMILY CHAIN BROKEN.



SO A HOUSEHOLD united by such tender ties, the sight of the preparations which now began to be made for a first separation was peculiarly painful. Mr. and Mrs. Clifford, with Lilly, Emily, and her nurse, were to set off in October, as the physician had declared that another winter at the North would be perilous in the extreme. It was a great trial to the affectionate mother; but regarding it as a solemn duty to preserve her health for the sake of her dear ones, and knowing that she could safely leave her older children in the care of Miss Arnold, she made her arrangements with a cheerful spirit, and perfect trust in her kind Heavenly Father.

They were to take a steamer to Charleston, and thence proceed to Florida, where they were to spend the winter. All their preparations being completed, on the night before their departure, Mrs. Clifford gathered her family in her sitting-room, and there commended them, in true Christian faith, to the covenant-keeping care of her God and her Saviour. It seemed as though an angel of peace was hovering over the family circle, singing sweet hymns of cheerfulness. Be that as it may, the sheltering arms of a gracious Father were beneath them, and Mrs. Clifford felt their strong support.

Early in the morning, the carriage was at the door, ready

to convey the travellers to New York. The tender mother almost fainted beneath the pain of parting; for although her faith was strong, her bodily strength was feeble, and the sight of her weeping children and servants almost unnerved her.

"Farewell, Edith!" said her mother, as folding her in her arms, she tenderly embraced her; "be a second mother to your dear sisters. We know not how soon you may be called to fill my place."

"Dear mother, do not say so," answered Edith.

Kissing Madge affectionately, Mrs. Clifford bade her to be obedient to Miss Arnold, and loving to her sisters. To Blanche and Adele, she gave her parting charge, with a mother's fond affection.

Aunt Priscilla stood aside, wiping her eyes, for she dearly loved her nephew's gentle wife. "I shall go soon, Mary, for I cannot bear to stay without you; but do be careful of yourself, and don't forget the bottle of black drops, when you are nervous."

Uncle Peter came forward, and respectfully taking his mistress's hand, kissed it reverently, and said in a devout manner, "The Lord bless you, and keep you, my dear, good Missis, and bring you safe and sound to us all again."

Mr. Clifford, not wishing to prolong the painful scene, took an affectionate leave of all his children, and giving fresh charges to Miss Arnold and Edith, he handed his wife into the first carriage, who sank back exhausted upon the seat. With another wave of his hand to those who stood watching on the front piazza, the carriage, followed by another, containing the children and their nurse, drove off, and were soon out of sight.

The house appeared very desolate without the beloved parents, and it required all Edith's self-control to return cheerfully to her duties. Mr. Clifford was a most devoted, affectionate husband, preserving for his interesting wife all that warmth of attachment which had characterized his youthful days. Nor was it very wonderful; for lovely as she was by nature,

she had taken great pains to make his home a blessed haven of repose, by those nameless attentions to his comfort, and the careful observation of all those little graceful proprieties which impart so many charms to the young bride. She had wisely judged, that what was esteemed so charming in the young girl, was doubly necessary in the intimate relations of husband and wife; consequently, she was always neat, and ready to receive her husband as a refined lady, and never annoyed him with those domestic details, with which many wives entertain their wearied husbands.

As he looked at her faded form and languid countenance, his heart sank within him at the thought of perhaps soon being compelled to resign this dearly cherished wife to the cold and silent grave. Seating himself by her side, and drawing her fragile figure nearer to him, while she leaned her head upon his shoulder, he pressed a kiss upon her pale lips, and mentally resolved, that so long as life should beat in that bosom, he would cherish and defend her from all evil, and spare no pains or expense, if by any means a life so dear could be prolonged.

"I feel great hopes for you, dear Mary, now that we really have cut loose from family cares, and are about to seek such a genial climate," said her husband.

"I am willing, George, that God should do just as he pleases with me, though I own that Ravenswood has many links to bind me to the earth, and if God should deem it best, I should wish to live for my children's sake;" and as she said this, she raised her soft blue eyes to her husband's face, while they beamed upon him an expression of unutterable love.

He stooped over the beloved wife, and throwing aside the clustering ringlets, with a soft caress, he laid his hand upon the fair forehead.

"You have been a dear, kind husband to me," she continued; "well have you redeemed your marriage vow. There is but one thing, dearest, that I could wish otherwise, and that is, that I could see you living the life and enjoying the hopes

of a real Christian. I cannot bear the thoughts of eternal separation; and you know, my husband, that you are as yet living without God in this world."

"Do not distress yourself, Mary; I hope to turn my attention some day to religion. If anything could win me, I think it would be your sweet example, wife."

Thus continued this communion of hearts, until they reached New York, where they found their good pastor, the Rev. Mr. Berkely, waiting for them. He had come down for the kind purpose of seeing their embarkation, and while waiting at the hotel for the hour of departure, he fervently commended the party to the protecting care of their Heavenly Father.

They went on board the steamer in the afternoon. The passage down the splendid bay of New York was glorious. It was one of the most beautiful evenings of autumn. The reflection of the glowing sunset on the water was magnificent, and the scenery all along the shore was interesting. The whole landscape spoke of peace and hope. After a short and pleasant voyage, they soon found themselves comfortably situated for the winter, at Magnolia.

Mrs. Clifford enjoyed the companionship of little Lilly, for she was a sweet, thoughtful child, and being tenderly attached to her mother, was a great comfort. She heard frequently from home, and the accounts were such as lulled her anxieties to rest. The mild climate, the peculiar treatment, and her entire rest, acted favorably upon her disease, and she was evidently better than she had been for many years. There was even an increase of flesh, and the lily of her cheek gave place to the more delicate tints of the rose. Her strength evidently improved, and Mr. Clifford, upon consultation with physicians at Magnolia, finally concluded on removing with his family in the spring to Europe, to stay a couple of years, spending their winters in the south of France. He wrote home to that effect, saying that they would return early in May, and bidding them make all necessary arrangements for their departure to the Continent.

The winter had passed rapidly, for the family at Ravens-

wood had all been very busy, and although nothing could compensate for the absence of their parents, still constant occupation prevented them from suffering much of loneliness. The young men spent their Christmas vacation with them, which lasted about two weeks. Gerald still appeared devoted to Edith, Ralph the kind friend of Madge, and Frank lively as ever.

One bright December morning, Frank came running into the breakfast-room, brimful of a party of pleasure which he had in view.

"What say you, girls, to a sleigh-ride? There has been a splendid fall of snow, and it would be delightful to run down as far as New York. Aunt Morris would be glad to see us; we could stay a couple of nights, see some of the sights of the great city, and then return home."

Seeing that Miss Arnold looked disapproval, he turned to her and said:

"Now, dear, good Miss Arnold, don't object. I have permission from my father for just such an excursion. I wrote in time, hoping for snow, and I think we had better take advantage of it." Running to get his letter, he brought it to her, that she might read for herself.

Full of the projected sport, Frank brought out their own and Gerald's sleighs, and warmly clad, with light and merry hearts, they started for a ride of about fifteen miles. The morning was bright and exhilarating. Bruno made one of the party, and safely lodged at his master's feet, he enjoyed the winter's ride as much as the rest. Their road lay through a picturesque part of the country; and although it was winter, yet the bright sunny sky, the snow-roofed houses, and the glittering icicles, pendent from the wintry-shrouded trees, all had a beauty of their own. Even Madge was delighted, and as she sat chatting with Ralph, really looked happy, and sometimes almost pretty.

When they reached the ferry, they sent the sleigh back again, fearing that a sudden change might prevent their return in the same way. Taking carriages on the other side,

they started for Mrs. Morris's splendid mansion. She received them with delight, and almost insisted that they should all stay at her house; but Josephine, Gerald and Ralph preferred a hotel, promising to return early in the evening.

In the meanwhile a party was arranged for the theatre. To Edith's surprise, Frank announced his intention of going.

"Do you really mean to go to the theatre?" asked Edith.

"Why not, sister?" replied Frank.

"Because you know dear mamma's opinion about such places of amusement."

"But, Edith, father thinks differently. He says that I will never be a man, if I do not see something of the world, and he has given me permission to go."

When they assembled after tea, Ralph, Gerald, and Edith declined; at which Mrs. Morris quietly sneered. Madge was very anxious to see the personification of some of her favorite characters, and as Hamlet was the play for the evening, she wished especially to go. Blanche and Adele had heard such glowing accounts, from their young cousins, about the charms of the stage, that they were scarcely to be denied, as they hung around Edith, begging for permission to partake of the pleasure. When they were alone, Adele said:

"I tell you what it is, Blanche, I think it's a shame that Edith is allowed to direct us; she is not so much older. I wish that we could go without her knowledge."

Blanche listened, desiring the same thing, but had not courage enough to express it.

Josephine had observed Madge's anxiety to partake of the amusement, and when she left the room, followed Madge, and knocking at her door, said:

"Madge, let me in. I have something to say to you of great importance."

She opened the door, and Josephine, looking around, said, in a whisper,—

"Can any one hear?"

"There is no danger," answered Madge, "speak on."

"Do you want to go with us to-night?"

"I do," replied the young girl.

"Then you shall go. I don't see why an older sister should be allowed to rule you so entirely."

Josephine had often looked on, and determined, if it was possible, to bring Madge out of what she called "the house of bondage." She appreciated her talents, and wished to imbue her with some of her own spirit.

"Would you go without Edith's knowledge?"

"Yes, if I can."

"Well, then, listen to me," said Josephine. "The three saints—Ralph, Edith, and Gerald—are going to-night to a concert. They will want you to go. Pretend to be sick, and I will manage all the rest. We will start before they do. I will direct the waiter to bring you around to the north door, and Frank will come there to meet you."

"I will do all but the pretending. I contend that I have a right to guide my own actions. I will just say I don't want to go, and the girls will stay at home to keep me company."

"We will outwit them this time, won't we, Madge? and you shall have the treat; besides, there is no great harm done. Your father does not object, if your mother does; and, according to her own theory, he is the master, and ought to be obeyed."

Although Madge had resolved to go, her conscience could not yield to this sophistry, when she remembered the pale face of her absent mother, and felt the power of her mild reproving eye.

After tea, Edith proposed the concert to the party. Madge quietly declined; and Blanche and Adele, who were in the secret, declared their intention of remaining at home with Madge. Edith was not surprised, as she so frequently declined invitations with her sisters.

The party for the theatre started first, then the others to the concert; and in a few minutes, the thoughtless girls were ready to accompany the servant, who was waiting for them in the hall. A short and hurried walk brought them to the theatre, where Frank was awaiting them.

"Well, little sisters, this is grand fun; you shall have one merry night at least."

Madge began to feel uncomfortable, as she wondered what Ralph would think of her conduct; but determined on gratifying her desires, she silenced the voice of conscience.

When they entered the theatre, they were perfectly bewildered and dazzled: the glittering lights—the brilliant costumes—the music—all enchanted them; but when the curtain arose, they were spell-bound; especially Frank and Madge, who had never dreamed of half of the enchantment. In the excitement of the evening, conscience was completely lulled to sleep; but when all was over, they had been too long and faithfully taught not to feel the evil of their conduct, and to dread a meeting with Edith. The pleasure of the evening, intoxicating as it had been, was more than counter-balanced by the reproaches of the monitor within, now awakening to accuse them of their guilt.

Edith arrived before them. On inquiring for her sisters, she was told that they had gone out; and not being able to obtain any satisfaction from the servants, she had to wait in anxious suspense, not knowing what to think. Half past ten o'clock arrived, and no tidings; eleven came, and still no news.

The family had not yet arrived. When the bell rang, Edith heard the door open, and thought that she distinguished Adele's voice among the party. To her utter amazement, all entered the parlor together. Madge first presented herself.

"Where have you been, Madge?" said Edith.

"I have been to the theatre," answered the young girl, in a defiant tone.

Blanche looked timid and alarmed, and shrank behind Frank. Adele tried to laugh at the joke. Ralph seemed cold and displeased, Gerald grieved; and Edith, in a sorrowful tone, said, "Frank, how could you do so? You know our dear mother's wishes on these subjects; and placed as they have been under my care, it is teaching them a sad lesson of disobedience and deceit.

"I think that you regard it in a manner much too serious,"

replied Frank ; "the girls never have had an opportunity of seeing such an entertainment ; and as father does not disapprove of it, I can't see that they have done any wrong under my care."

Ralph avoided Madge ; for while he had confidence in her truth, he hoped for better things from her ; but now that she had manifestly departed from that straight path, he was deeply disappointed. Madge was miserable, for the friendship of Ralph Cameron was her greatest earthly comfort ; and to lose that, would be to lose her last hope. When she returned to her room, she thought over all her conduct ; but having listened to the injurious teachings of Josephine Fortescue, wondered if she was not wise enough to judge for herself. Her proud heart began to rise up even against Ralph, and to long for that liberty of action which she saw Josephine enjoying. And yet, when she remembered all his generous kindness, she could not but long for a reconciliation ; and ere she slept that night, she resolved to seek Ralph next day, and explain her conduct.

At an early hour on the following morning, Josephine called, and when she saw the state of things, was very well satisfied ; for she determined, if possible, to produce an estrangement between the two. They talked over the affair of the evening before.

"Surely, Madge," said Josephine, "you are not going to ask pardon of that proud Pharisee ? What right has he to govern your actions ? If you do, you will greatly demean yourself ; and as to Edith, she is only your sister. You have as good a right as she, to seek your own pleasures."

The poison sank deep into her proud heart, and she began to dream of independence and female rights. Ralph called after breakfast, and evidently sought an opportunity to speak to Madge ; she avoided his eye, answered him in monosyllables, and wounded his noble heart. She was but fifteen years old now, but there was about the young girl a strength of determination and resentment, that illy became one so young, and which we seldom see in woman, at even a mature age. She

had allowed the evil spirit to gain the mastery. Ralph's influence was weakened by the power of a disappointed woman, and under the mistaken idea of independence, Madge was throwing away a friend that had proved himself a brother indeed.

Edith's spirit was deeply saddened. She saw how Madge and Frank had been affected by their new pleasure. She dreaded the results on such natures, and deeply lamented the increasing power of Josephine Fortescue. Under these adverse circumstances, a visit commenced under such sunny skies had been clouded by these worldly associations. She longed for her quiet home, and on the third day, they started for a return to Ravenswood. They could scarcely realize the change in their feelings. The sky was still cloudless, but the voice of merriment was hushed. Edith was sad at the thought of her sister's departure from duty; Frank was vexed because she was depressed; Gerald sympathized with her feelings; Ralph and Madge were estranged; Josephine rejoiced maliciously; Blanche and Adele were ashamed, and the whole party very wretched. Miss Arnold soon perceived that much was amiss, and on discovering the whole affair, endeavored to set it before them in its true light. When she understood the part which Josephine had taken, she was more than ever distressed at the intimacy, especially between her and Madge, which now became closer than ever.

The rest of the vacation was spent sadly, for Madge withstood all Ralph's advances to his former brotherly relations; and, misled by Josephine, she endeavored to appear independent, but had too much feeling not to be miserable. Once more, during the holidays, Frank rode down to New York to go again to the theatre. He seemed captivated, and was often heard, when alone, reciting from Shakespeare, and was completely engrossed by the fascinating amusement. Edith parted from the young men sadly. She trembled for Frank, missed the sweet sympathy of Gerald, and grieved to see how coldly Madge bade Ralph farewell, although she saw that it cost the poor misguided girl a bitter struggle. She had one blessed

refuge at a throne of grace, and there she brought all dear ones; and as she named them one by one to her Heavenly Father, hoped that Divine grace would rescue them all at last from the deep dark prison-house of inbred sin.

During the winter, she heard frequently from her mother. Accounts were encouraging; and when the news reached them that they were to commence making preparations for a removal to Europe in May, the household was consequently in a great state of excitement. All were pleased with the idea of a visit to the Continent; as it was proposed that they should travel, through the summer, and spend the winter in the south of France. Edith was grieved at the thought of losing Gerald, and Madge cared not where she went, as she felt that she had lost Ralph Cameron's friendship, and it mattered not where she dwelt. The bright chain of harmony seemed broken. When alone, musing over the past, Madge frequently asked who had first snapped the links. Sometimes her heart whispered, "Is it Josephine?" and yet she had grown so desperate under the certainty that she had finally lost Ralph's friendship, that she gave herself up completely to the guidance of her new friend.

Edith felt also the snapping of the golden links of their family union; but tracing the first to the separation of their dear parents from the family circle, she felt that the hand of God had unclasped them for wise purposes; and while she prayed with earnest faith, she still hoped for the reunion of all these broken links, if not in this world, in the brighter one to come. These blessed hopes sustained her; but poor Madge, farther and farther off, into the barren desert of doubt and suspicion, found her heart chilled once more, for want of a genial, firm, and loving spirit.

Little did she think how completely Ralph still read her heart, understood her temptation, prayed for the misguided girl, and looked for her return. He feared it might be long, for he saw her surrounded by the mists of prejudice; but still he hoped, and still he loved the wayward child of genius. Believing that he had ceased to care for her, Madge was per-

fectly reconciled to the idea of leaving America, and began to look forward with some anxiety to the prospect of seeing other countries, and of revelling among the beautiful scenery of the interior of Europe. The winter passed rapidly away. That sweet season had come, when the singing of the birds is heard in the green forests, among the leafy boughs; and, in the language of Scripture, when "the voice of the turtle is heard in the land."

Early in May, the parents returned, Mrs. Clifford greatly improved, having gained flesh, with a more rosy-tinted complexion, and much more strength. They were all delighted to be together once more. Preparations for departure rapidly progressed. The house was to be left in the care of a steward and his family, in whom they could repose perfect confidence. Frank and Gerald came home on a short visit before the family sailed, and anxious to see Ralph, Mrs. Clifford sent for him also. Madge seemed softened at the idea of leaving Ralph unreconciled, and often appeared disturbed at the thought, and almost inclined to grant the interview which he sought; but the old pride held her back, and the certainty that she had estranged every friend but Josephine, made her still shrink from his notice.

One evening, she had wandered to her old walk by the river-side. Seated on the bank, she was sadly musing on the past, and wondering over the future. While absorbed in thought, she did not perceive footsteps approaching, until Ralph Cameron stood before her. She was about to run hastily away, when, with his former spirit of command, he took the little hand which trembled in his grasp, and seating her by his side, said:

"Why do you avoid me, Madge? Are you really going away, so completely estranged from your old friend?"

"You cannot wish it to be different, Mr. Cameron, after the events of last winter. My conduct was so bad, that with your principles, I do not see how you can notice me. I deceived my sister, and have ever since been pursuing a path of determined transgression."

"Are you happy, Madge?"

"Happy!" answered the child, "I do not expect to be happy. I am ugly, disagreeable, proud, and bad-tempered. Nobody can love me; all I ask is to be let alone."

"I shall never do that, Madge. When I profess friendship, it is for life; and I shall never cease to care for you, to pray for you, and to look for your return to me, Madge, as your friend, but most of all to God, whom you have offended."

The trembling lip and tearful eye, betrayed the feelings with which Madge listened to the old familiar tones of kindness. She did not trust herself to look into Ralph's face, for she mentally referred to Josephine's sneers, and inwardly resolved not to place herself so completely under her friend's control. Under the influence of this evil feeling, she merely replied:

"Thank you, Mr. Cameron, for your kind instructions, but I am growing older every day, and think that I ought to act a little more independently."

"Foolish child!" replied Ralph, "you will be sorry for refusing my friendship. Remember what I say,—you will come back to your old friend; but I fear that you are laying up for yourself a store of sorrow before that day."

"When I feel the need of your advice, I will certainly ask it, Mr. Cameron," replied Madge, "but for the present, I have a strong-minded friend of my own sex, who is able to direct me."

"Do you mean Josephine Fortescue, Madge? I am very sorry that you should have chosen such a guide. She is one illy qualified to direct such a spirit as yours."

Ralph saw that the mood of the young girl was completely changed, and that the poison of Josephine's teaching had commenced its work. His noble heart was deeply pained on feeling the estrangement which had thus been produced; but with true Christian faith, he laid his hand on Madge's head, and said:

"I leave you, my dear child, in God's care; may he guide, watch over, and bear with you, and bring you into his fold."

Tears filled her eyes, and choked her utterance, as she replied:

"You will not forget me, Mr. Cameron, though I have proved myself so unworthy?"

“No, Madge, in your distant sojourn in a foreign land, remember, that at morning and at night I shall bear you on my heart before a throne of grace.”

Somewhat softened, Madge accompanied Ralph to the house. Next day, he took his sorrowful leave of the family, and returned to college, the same kind and faithful friend of poor misguided Madge. She stood upon the piazza, watching the carriage which conveyed her friend away, and kept down the swelling feelings of regret which agitated her young heart at the remembrance of what she had thrown away, and secretly wondered if Josephine would prove the same faithful friend that Ralph had been. The sequel will show the results of her present course of proud independence.



CHAPTER XI.

BEYOND THE SEA.



RAVELLING preparations rapidly progressed. Gerald and Frank still tarried; for, looking forward to a separation for two years, they could not bear to sunder the last tie too soon.

The evening before departure at length arrived. After tea, Gerald whispered to Edith, "Will you walk with me?" And silently they pursued their way down the shady avenue to the old elm tree, a spot so much endeared by so many tender recollections. Edith leaned on Gerald's arm mournfully and silently. Not one word was spoken, until they reached the trysting-place. It was a lovely evening in May; all around was fresh and smiling, but the two young hearts felt no sympathy with the loveliness of the evening; for thoughts of the deep ocean which would soon roll between them, sank into their bosoms like lead, and quenched each joyous feeling. Gerald seated himself by Edith, upon a rustic settee that stood under the old tree. Taking her hand, he said:

"Edith, what a lonely place Ravenswood will be when you are far away! I cannot tell you how sadly I look forward to our separation. I can scarcely bear to think of even visiting our old haunts when you are absent."

"Are you sure, Gerald," replied Edith, "that you will con-

tinue to remember me? May not absence dim the recollection of your early friend?"

"No, Edith, nothing can efface your image from my heart. I cannot see you depart, without a promise which will bind you to me for life, as my sweet companion."

"That promise is yours, Gerald," solemnly replied Edith; "no other can ever be so dear to me, as the cherished friend of my early years, the future partner of my earthly lot; but remember, Gerald, if you should prove untrue to me, my hopes of earthly happiness are at an end."

"Do not talk so, Edith; it seems to imply a doubt of my constancy. You will write frequently. I shall expect to hear by every steamer, and shall be greatly disappointed if you should be negligent."

"You need not fear that, Gerald; it will be my greatest comfort in a foreign land."

"I have a little case here, Edith, which I have thought that you would value," said Gerald; and taking it from his pocket, he handed it to her.

What was her delight on seeing a perfect resemblance of himself, painted by his own hand! Long ere this, he had secured a picture of Edith, which all had pronounced excellent, and which he preserved among his treasures.

In sad, though pleasant intercourse, they whiled away the twilight hour, and returning, when they came in sight of his house, Gerald paused, and pointing to his home, said, "Oh, Edith, how long the time appears, ere I can claim you as the mistress of Oak Hall. How many years may elapse before that happy day?"

"It may never be, Gerald. The future is wisely hidden from us. Sickness or death may overtake either of us; and should I lose my precious mother, duty might call me elsewhere; but while I desire to commit all the future to God entirely, be assured that my earthly love is all your own."

The shades of night gathered rapidly around them; the whip-poor-will sang sadly his evening song; the night-hawk sailed over their heads, screaming as he directed his course to

the woods ; the old elm tree was seen no more, and Oak Hall was concealed by the curtain of night. As they reached the piazza, the moon arose slowly and majestically, shedding her pale light over the landscape. Their spirits were in unison with the melancholy of the picture, and after sitting a few minutes on the piazza, they entered the house. The parents fully sanctioned the transaction of the evening, and Edith's high nature felt a new motive to grow in grace and elevation of character, when she looked upon herself as the betrothed of Gerald Fortescue.

The morning dawned propitiously. At an early hour, the carriages stood before the door. All the servants but Uncle Peter had been dismissed. A trusty family was left in charge of the house, and the faithful old man was appointed to take care of the grounds. Aunt Priscilla had come up to take leave of the family. She had furnished them abundantly with medicine for sea-sickness. She had made each a nice shoe-bag and needle-book, and in Edith's hand she placed a package, which she desired her not to open until she embarked on board the vessel. Miss Arnold and a faithful old nurse accompanied the party. The latter was a faithful servant, who had nursed Mrs. Clifford when an infant, and being tenderly attached to her, had lived with her ever since her marriage, and had become an indispensable appendage to the family. When all was prepared, Mrs. Clifford stood on the piazza, taking one last look of her beautiful home. Turning to her husband as she leaned upon him, she said, "We shall see nothing lovelier than this, George. Look at that flowing river, the fresh green forests, and those rolling hills. Were it not for the hope of restored health, nothing could tempt me to leave this charming spot." Turning, she bade Aunt Priscilla an affectionate farewell.

Uncle Peter covered his face to hide his tears, and blessing his kind mistress, he moved rapidly away. Gerald and Frank accompanied the party to New York, where they took a steamer for Liverpool. The young men stayed on board until the last minute. When the signal to leave was given, farewells

were spoken hastily. Gerald wrung Edith's hand, and pressing it to his lips, in another minute was gone.

As the steamer slowly moved from the wharf, Edith who stood watching, pale and motionless, perceived Gerald standing with his hat down over his face. With one more wave of his hand, he turned slowly away, and taking Frank's arm, they walked silently back to their hotel. The next day they returned to college, and the vessel pursued her gallant course rapidly out to sea.

Remembering Aunt Priscilla's package, Edith opened it and to her surprise found a draft for one hundred dollars for her own personal use, as a parting gift from her aged relative.

Mrs. Clifford suffered much from sea-sickness, and the services of dear old nurse were invaluable. Edith was often very sad. Madge was moody and sought solitude. Blanche and Adele enjoyed the novelty of their situation,—everything on board the ship delighted them. Lilly and Emily were the especial charge of nurse, and Edith, in company with Miss Arnold, learned to delight in the grandeur and magnificence of scenes on the deep blue and boundless ocean.

After a pleasant passage, they arrived in safety at the desired haven. Staying but a few days in Liverpool, they proceeded to London, and the whole party were delighted with the country through which they travelled,—the railroads were conducted so admirably, and the travelling so easy and pleasant. They passed many beautiful homes, and were especially struck with the hedge-row beauties which they observed. The white hawthorn blossom, now in full bloom, dividing the field, gave the country the appearance of a highly cultivated garden. The charming villas, the rose-embowered cottages, the grassy lanes, and countless village spires towering up to heaven, all lent enchantment to the picturesque scenery which everywhere met the eye.

On reaching London, they delivered a few letters of introduction to some choice English families, and were delighted with the acquaintances which they formed. They had brought letters to a family by the name of Percy, whom they found

living out of town,—at Richmond,—in one of the most charming suburbs of the great metropolis. Their house was an old-fashioned English hall, provided with every comfort, and even many luxuries of life, surrounded by highly cultivated grounds. The noble old trees looked as ancient as if they had sheltered several generations, and their flower-garden was laid out in the most tasteful manner.

When Mr. and Mrs. Clifford paid their first visit, they soon found themselves domesticated with one of the finest specimens of a refined and pious English family. It consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Percy, a governess, Clara, the eldest daughter, a girl of fifteen; May, the next, a child of thirteen, and Lydia, a little girl of six. Lionel, a youth of nineteen, was absent at college, and to judge from the affectionate mention of this beloved member of the family, one might suppose that he was everything that a son and brother ought to be. Be that as it may, the loving household looked at him through the glasses which made everything *couleur de rose*. When Clara took the young girls out on an excursion through the grounds, they were continually chatting of Brother Lionel.

“Do you see that pigeon-box? Brother made it and nailed it up there, and we take care of his pigeons while he is away.”

Running still further on, they came to a pond of gold-fish.

“Look at those fish, Miss Edith,” said Clara. “Some of them are so tame, that when brother throws crumbs of bread, they will come up close to the border of the pond to get them; but, no wonder, Lionel is so kind. He would not even hurt a fish.”

When they came to the stables, Clara called to the groom: “John, will you bring out Oscar?” and very soon a fine-looking horse came ambling gaily out of the stable, and neighing at the sight of the children, came rubbing his head against Clara’s hand, and seemed as tame among them as a pet dog.

“That is Lionel’s horse. He loves brother just as much as we do, and when he comes home, Oscar is as happy as any one else.”

May went running into the stable, and calling out, “Tray,

come out here," her call was soon responded to by a fine old dog, that came bounding along to greet his young friends.

"That is Lionel's dog," said May. "I wish you could see how he minds brother, and yet he never strikes him, or says an unkind word."

"When does your brother come home?" asked Blanche.

"Not till vacation. When he returns this summer, he is going to travel with his tutor."

"Is he handsome?" asked Adele.

"Yes, indeed," replied May; "he is splendid. He has the most beautiful black eyes, and fine black hair, and such white teeth, and then his smile is so sweet; but when he gets angry, I feel afraid of Lionel, for his eyes look so fiery, they seem like lightning."

"Oh! then he does get angry," said Adele.

"Yes; I remember once, when our groom beat his horse furiously, Lionel was very angry, and threatened to have him turned away; but when the man begged his pardon, he forgave him. Then he was angry again, when he saw a proud-looking man knock down a poor little match girl in the street. Dear brother picked up all her matches for her; and he was so vexed with the proud man, that he seized him by the collar, and was going to knock him down, only he begged his pardon."

"Well, I think that I should like to know this brother of yours," said Adele.

"Perhaps you may, some day," replied May. "I don't think that anybody has such a darling brother, so good, so wise, so beautiful."

Many were the pleasant hours spent by the Cliffords with this excellent family. On their first Sabbath in England, they passed the day with the Percy's, going to church with them in the morning. They returned to dinner. At the table, each child was expected to repeat as much as was remembered of the sermon, and the conversation was such as became the day. In the evening Mr. Percy conducted family prayer in the library; and on each morning, every member of the family

repeated a text of Scripture, and children, servants, and the whole household, joined in the solemn worship. They truly obeyed the Scriptural injunction, to "use hospitality without grudging," and our travellers soon felt as much at home with them, as in the family of relatives. Under their kind escort, they explored all the places of interest in and about London. Madge was charmed with her visit to Westminster Abbey. Standing amidst its long dark cloisters, surrounded by the dust of sleeping kings and rival monarchs, she could scarcely breathe, so intense was the feeling with which she gazed upon those solemn monuments of human greatness. The misty light of these dim cloisters imparted a mysterious grandeur to the imposing scene; and the vivid imagination of Madge Clifford found it very easy to people the dark Abbey with spirits of the departed.

Shakespeare seemed to arise from his silent sepulchre, and, waving his magic wand among the tombs, he called up many illustrious spirits from their deep slumbers, who stalked before her mental vision in all their grandeur. Henry the Eighth and his murdered queens rose first, the gloomy Katharine of Arragon, the bewitching Anne Boleyn, the beautiful Catharine Howard, the scorned and disappointed Anne of Cleves, and last the wily Catharine Parr; all seemed to pass before her, with accusing looks of injured womanhood. Richard the Third seemed confronted with the murdered Princes, and the ghost of injured Clarence seemed to point his pale finger at his murderer. The haughty Elizabeth shrank from the shadowy form of the lovely Mary Stuart, and she could almost hear the clanging of knightly armor, as she recalled the martial deeds of Richard Cœur de Lion.

Poets chanted their magnificent lays, and great musicians breathed unearthly music around her. It was at an hour of daily service when she visited the Abbey, and as the choir chanted their solemn hymns, she could easily imagine that she was in another world, listening to heavenly strains around the everlasting throne. She was bewildered, overpowered;

not one word could she speak. So much did she feel herself surrounded by the mighty dead, that she would have felt it sacrilege to speak in such an audience-chamber. When treading again the streets of London, she felt as if she had been in dream-land, and for hours she could not recover the usual tone of her mind.

After having visited all the places of note, it was arranged to proceed to the charming lakes of Westmoreland; after which, it was proposed to make a summer tour on the Continent, and to spend the following winter at Pau, in the south of France. They parted with much regret from their pleasant friends, the Percy's, but with the sanguine feelings of the young, the juvenile portion of the party hoped to meet again.

Travelling through a most picturesque part of England, they visited the charming lakes of Westmoreland. That of Derwent Water was peculiarly beautiful, dotted over with green islands, and decorated with elegant country-seats, in a state of high cultivation. A beautiful, though not very noisy cascade, whose musical waters murmured at the entrance, was an additional feature of beauty. In their tour, they stopped at Wordsworth's residence, on Rydal Mount, situated among the most enchanting scenery of the north of England. In view of the poet's home, Madge read aloud some of his most beautiful poems, and realized much more keenly the charm of his descriptions.

Early one morning, Blanche and Adele, with the permission of their parents, started on an excursion in search of some long grasses, which they had observed in their rambles. Taking a little boat they were safely conducted over the lake to one of the green islands, on the borders of which they hoped to find the object of their search. When they reached the island, they dismissed the boatman, telling him to return in about an hour.

It was one of the most genial days in June, when the blue sky, in its perfect transparency, seemed as though the spirits who might visit its confines could almost be seen by human

eyes. The air was exhilarating; and the young creatures, who bounded in all the gayety of youthful spirits over the green velvet sward, and under the leafy trees, seemed under the inspiration of one of Nature's brightest holidays. Attired in simple white dresses, with large straw flats, tied under the chin with a light blue ribbon, they flitted about like some pure vision of youth and beauty. They were now in their fourteenth year, and were charming specimens of that time of youthful loveliness.

"Look there, Blanche," said Adele, "there are some of the very grasses which we want; but they are on the other side of the lake. How can we get there? O, I see! there is a boat. I know how to row, for I have rowed many a time on our own dear Hudson."

"Are you not afraid to try it, Adele?" asked Blanche, who was much more timid than her sister.

"No, indeed; can anything be more quiet than this beautiful lake? and it is a very short distance. Let us try it."

Accordingly, Adele quickly unmoored the boat, and in a few minutes the young creatures were gliding rapidly along in search of their grasses. Adele had thrown off her hat; her luxuriant black hair hung in clustering ringlets around her bright face, and down her shoulders; exercise and excitement had imparted an additional glow to her olive complexion, and more brilliancy to her sparkling eyes. They went along, singing merily, until they came in sight of the grasses. Leaning over the boat, they succeeded in obtaining some fine variegated specimens.

"Oh, Blanche, see what beauties! But they are so far off," said Adele. But not accustomed to be deterred by difficulties in the execution of her plans, she gave a few more strokes of her oar, and was almost in reach of her prize. Extending the oar to draw them nearer, she found that she could not reach them; and leaning over, as Blanche thought, too far, her sister was alarmed, and called out,

"Adele! Adele! be careful. I am afraid that you will upset the boat."

Adele stood up one minute in the boat, and giving another stroke, she was so near that she could almost reach the grasses stretching forward, the motion caused the boat to recede a little; another effort, and in the long stretch which Adele made, she lost her balance, fell over, and in one instant was in the water. Blanche screamed for help, as she saw her sister go down; and in her terror, dropping the oar, the boat floated out into the stream, leaving Adele struggling in the water. In her agony, Blanche continued screaming, until overcome with terror, she sank fainting in the boat,

During the scene, a young man had been seated on a shady knoll, somewhat back from the shore, watching the pretty picture, and admiring the sportive grace with which the young girls had been flitting about on the island. Hearing the sudden plunge, and the screams at the same minute, he flew to the shore, and as Adele was going down the second time, succeeded in snatching her from a watery grave.

As he raised the lovely from of the insensible girl, he feared that it was too late; but he laid her down on the shore, in the position most favorable for her recovery, and looking round, he called loudly for help. Perceiving two men not far off from the shore, he succeeded in attracting their attention. As quickly as possible, they conveyed the apparently lifeless form to the nearest cottage, and on applying the usual restoratives, the young man was rejoiced to see signs of returning life.

In the meanwhile, he had dispatched the men in search of Blanche. Taking a boat, they soon reached the poor child, who still laid insensible in the bottom of the boat. On conveying her to the cottage where Adele laid still weak, and in a state of great nervous excitement, she was committed to the care of the kind people who had administered to the case of her sister. So soon as Blanche opened her eyes, she looked wildly around, and exclaimed, in a pitiful tone of agony, "Oh, Adele! Adele! Where is my sister? Tell me the worst!"

"She is here," replied her preserver, "safe, and anxious to see you."

When Blanche was conducted into her sister's presence

they threw themselves into each other's arms, and wept convulsively for some minutes.

"Oh, Adele, what a fearful dream I have had! How could I have lived without you, my dear, dear sister!" exclaimed Blanche.

The young man who had rescued Adele stood gazing on the scene with feelings of deep interest. He looked about nineteen, with fine dark eyes and hair, and a peculiarly noble bearing.

"How can I thank you sufficiently?" said Adele. "What will my parents say? I was so foolish, and I fear disobedient."

"Do not say a word about thanks," replied the youth; "I am too happy to have saved your life. When you feel sufficiently recovered, allow me to conduct you to your parents."

"Let us go soon," said Adele; and attired in dry clothes, borrowed from the cottagers, they started for their hotel. The young man rowed the boat himself; and on drawing near to the hotel, they met the old nurse, coming out in anxious search of her darlings.

"Where have you been so long? your mamma is very uneasy," said the old woman.

"Oh, nurse, don't scold us; I have been nearly drowned," replied Adele; "and if it had not been for this kind friend, I should never have seen you again."

Seizing his hand, the faithful old woman imprinted on it respectful kisses, while she uttered, "Heaven be a praised for this goodness! Thank you a thousand times! We could not spare our darling twins!"

Nurse broke the intelligence quickly to Mrs. Clifford, who in the joy of receiving her rescued child, could not find it in her heart to reprove her at that time for her rashness. Turning to the youth, with swimming eyes, she said, "And to whom am I indebted for this deliverance?"

"It matters not, dear madam; I shall leave this evening for my home, and would prefer to remain unknown in this matter. I have been instrumental in restoring your sweet daughter to your arms, and this moment amply repays me."

Bidding her good-bye, the young stranger took his departure; and when Mr. Clifford made inquiries for him, no trace of him could be found. A young man answering his description had arrived the day before, stayed all night, and had departed in the morning. But the beautiful vision of the young girls went with him, and he often wondered who they were. Blanche had appeared almost as beautiful as an angelic form, but the sportive, piquant graces of mischievous Adele, had pleased him most.

On passing through the hall, Adele had found a small pocket-book, with tablets, on which were noted college engagements, and a few scraps of fugitive poetry. A few specimens of grass were carefully folded away, in a small envelope, on which was written, "A memorial of the water-nymph of Westmoreland." She was almost certain that this belonged to her preserver, and she carefully laid it away among the curiosities collected on their journey.

In a day or two they took their departure from the charming lakes, and on their route they visited Melrose Abbey, and walked among its ruins by moonlight, fully realizing the beauty of Sir Walter Scott's description :

"If thou wouldst view fair Melrose aright,
Go visit it by the pale moonlight;
For the gay beams of lightsome day
Gild, but to flout, the ruins gray.
When the broken arches are black in night,
And each shafted oriel glimmers white;
When the cold light's uncertain shower
Streams on the ruin'd central tower;
When buttress and buttress, alternately,
Seemed formed of ebon and ivory;
When silver edges the imagery,
And the scrolls that teach thee to live and die;
When distant Tweed is heard to rave,
And the owlet to hoot o'er the dead man's grave,
Then go—but go alone the while—
Then view St. David's ruin'd pile;
And, home returning, soothly swear,
Was never scene so sad and fair!"

They could not leave England without visiting Abbotsford

and in Sir Walter's library they sat and listened to the music of the Tweed, as it rippled over its pebbly bed, and could well imagine the soothing charm which it must have had for such a mind as that of the former occupant of this honored, consecrated spot.

Edith wished for Gerald to enjoy these charming scenes with her. While absent from Ralph, Madge thought more frequently of him than of Josephine Fortescue. Blanche and Adele found amusement everywhere, and the whole party were encouraged and flattered by the manifest change in Mrs. Clifford's health. So much had she improved, that she appeared to enter, with all the enthusiasm of youth, into the delight which their journey afforded. Miss Arnold was a peculiarly interesting companion, for in all their journeying she kept her pupils well informed, geographically, historically, practically, and even politically, of the land through which they travelled. With such a teacher, her young charge would gain more knowledge in one month than could be gathered from books in a year. Each was required to keep notes of all that they saw daily, and at their stopping-places their journals were read by Miss Arnold, and useful hints given for future notices. When stopping long enough, it was her custom to correct their manuscripts. They also gathered specimens of plants and minerals in their journey, which they carefully preserved for future use.

So much did the children desire it, that Mr. Clifford consented to visit the ruins of Kenilworth Castle, ere he embarked for France. They first stopped at Warwick, where there is a very fine old castle, where Madge luxuriated in all the reveries of her romantic nature; then they directed their course to Kenilworth, a small place in the vicinity, celebrated only for its magnificent castle and park, the former of which is now in ruins. It was a gift of Queen Elizabeth to her favorite, Dudley, Earl of Leicester. The area inclosed within the castle walls was seven acres, and the circuit of the park and chase alone, was not less than twenty miles. As they stood amid its ruins, Madge could easily picture the scenes of courtly grandeur once acted there, when the haughty Elizabeth visited the Earl of Leicester;

and her blood chilled with horror, when she thought of the mysterious disappearance of the lovely Amy Robsart, when waiting for her lord and husband, betrayed, as many thought, by the whistle which her loving heart recognized as Leicester's but which only lured her to a horrid death. She thought of the deep vault beneath the treacherous trap, and of the form seen only by its snowy robes, which lay there, a victim to man's perfidy. As they stood in silence amid its forsaking and imposing ruins, Elizabeth, the haughty queen, Essex and Leicester, the favorites ruined by her preference, Amy Robsart, the murdered wife, Burleigh, the sagacious statesman, Sir Walter Raleigh, the accomplished courtier,—all passed before their mental vision; but no voice could answer to the names once so powerful, and none recall them from the world where they await the resurrection trump. To Elizabeth, and all her flattering courtiers, what is ambition now but a stinging scorpion, if it has caused the ruin of their immortal souls! With thoughts like these, they left the scene, deeply impressed with a sense of the vanity of earthly grandeur and ambition. Ere they left the shores of England, they passed through the county of Devonshire, where they saw much that was beautiful and picturesque.

They had seen much to admire in England,—high cultivation, lovely rural landscapes,—much beyond the merely rural,—refined society, remains of ancient greatness, views of old castles, noble churches, richly endowed charities, and much that was elevated in literature; but their hearts turned back to their own favored land, and could still say, "America, with all thy faults, I love thee still; with all thy impulsiveness and love of liberty, bordering sometimes on wild license, I love thee still;" for in those very excesses may be seen the effort of a great nation to reach a great principle,—that of universal freedom, and no aristocracy but that of worth and intellect.



CHAPTER XII.

PRINCIPLES TRIED.



HE eve of their departure from England was cheered by news from home: letters from Gerald, Frank, and Ralph had arrived, all containing intelligence gratifying to their friends. Gerald's breathed of calm and pure affection, Frank's of joyous greetings, and Ralph's of kind and brotherly advice to Madge, which would have produced a salutary effect, had it not been accompanied by a counteracting epistle from Josephine. Edith had kept a journal, full of sweet pictures of nature's loveliest scenes, and sanctified by the highest sentiments of deep, enduring affection; this was for Gerald's especial benefit, on which no other eyes were ever permitted to rest.

Madge had written fully to Josephine; but the confidence which had once existed between herself and Ralph was not yet restored, and could not be while under the influence of such a spirit as Josephine Fortescue. 'Tis true, she answered his kind letter; but with a jealous watchfulness, she repressed all expressions of former friendship, lest he should imagine that his influence was returning.

Ere the party sailed for Havre, they despatched their package, and on the next day took a steamer, which in a few hours landed them on the shores of France. They were greatly annoyed by the visit of the officers, who searched all their

trunks, and asked many impertinent questions, which the free spirit of Americans could ill brook. Accustomed to travel where and how they pleased, they could scarcely realize the new situation in which they found themselves placed. After obtaining the passports, they proceeded rapidly to Paris. Everything struck them as splendid in the extreme. The magnificent public buildings; the fine parks, and appearance of gayety everywhere manifest, completely bewildered our young travellers, and they could scarcely describe the impression which these new scenes made upon their minds.

Proceeding to Hôtel du Louvre, they engaged rooms for the night, but as they expected to remain some weeks in Paris, Mr. Clifford proceeded on the following morning to deliver several letters, one to a distinguished French family, named D'Ouville, and another to Mr. Stuart, an English gentleman. Although M. D'Ouville was a gentleman of wealth, he found him residing in a suite of apartments in Rue Saint Denis. He perceived that this was the general custom, and accordingly requested M. D'Ouville to conduct him to a suitable lodgings for his family.

When he arrived at the Rue de Rivoli, he found himself at the porte cochère of a very large dark sandstone house, six stories high. On ringing the bell, the porter (who must be ready at all hours of the twenty-four,) answered the call, saying that there were rooms to rent. Mr. Clifford perceived that the house was built around a hollow square, having a courtyard sufficiently large to admit the turning of a carriage. On ascending the staircase, he asked to be shown through the vacant rooms. With true delicacy, Mr. Clifford shrunk back, not wishing to intrude upon the retirement of private families. M. D'Ouville smiled, and said: "*Vous n'avez rien à craindre, les Français sont accoutumés à ces choses là; ils ne vous trouveront pas importun.*" (You need not fear; French people are accustomed to these things, and will not think it an intrusion.) Accordingly, Mr. Clifford was conducted, unceremoniously, from room to room by the landlord, who appeared to think himself privileged to intrude upon his tenants at any hour. On opening a door, to his dismay he observed a lady half-dressed,

and was about retreating, when, with the utmost sang froid, she exclaimed, "Entrez, Monsieur," and shrugging her shoulders, added, "Nous n'y pouvons rien." (We cannot help it.) On passing on the next room, a French gentleman arose, and with true politeness, said, "Voilà un joli appartement : il sera libre demain." (This is a pleasant room : it will be vacated to-morrow.)

On proceeding up another flight, Mr. Clifford soon discovered that he was in very different quarters, it being evident that the family occupying these rooms were English, and regarded the visitors as disagreeable intruders. Mr. Clifford bowed politely, and said, "Excuse me, sir : this was not my own seeking, I was introduced by the landlord." As soon as the gentleman perceived that the visitor was one who sympathized with his own feeling of reserve, he replied, "you are excusable, sir ; but you will be much annoyed by the free manners of these French people." Passing further on, they saw a couple of young ladies hastily retreating into a closet, for fear of being observed by strangers.

The landlord, perceiving that Mr. Clifford was pleased with the last suite of rooms, bowing politely, said, "Le Conte D'Arlinecourt a vu ces chambres, il y a quelques jours, il les a trouvées délicieuses." (The Count D'Arlinecourt was looking at these rooms a few days since and was perfectly charmed.) Mr. Clifford smiled significantly on hearing this flourish, and with true American republicanism, wondered how the admiration of a French count could possibly recommend the rooms.

Heartily glad that they suited him, he engaged them, already furnished with everything excepting linen and silver. Having concluded his bargain, he hastily left the house, powerfully impressed by the contrast here presented, to the sweet private homes of domestic comfort and refinement in his own native land. In the afternoon he conveyed his family to their apartments, hired an additional domestic, and soon they found themselves as comfortably situated as they could be, away from dear Ravenswood. Mrs. Clifford felt the contrast painfully ; for here were found nobles, laborers, grisettes, saint and vagabond, all

dwelling beneath the same roof; and although in no way interfering with each other, yet the consciousness was annoying to her delicate and retiring habits. On the next day, Madame D'Ouville called, accompanied by her daughters, aged eighteen and sixteen. They were fine specimens of an intelligent French family; still the air of high fashion and French elegance, which distinguished their dress and carriage, told that they were "of the earth, earthy." They spoke of many places of public amusement, to which they invited Mrs. Clifford and her family, who politely declined attendance upon any which she could not frequent in her own land. "When in Rome, to do as Rome does," was not her maxim of Christian morality.

It was her wish that her children should visit interesting places in Paris, provided that their characters were not injured thereby. At an early hour on the next day Madame D'Ouville called in her carriage, to take our travellers out to ride in the garden of the Tuilleries. They were much struck with its extent and beauty, as nothing in their own country can at all compare with its elegance. To the west of the Imperial Palace the gardens were elegantly laid out with gravelled walks, terraces, plots of flowers, exquisite shrubbery, groves of splendid trees, and basins of water, interspersed with beautiful statues in bronze and marble. Numbers of elegant equipages were driving through the grounds, and everywhere groups of gaily-dressed persons were enjoying the refreshing shade.

"Look, Blanche!" said Adele; "I wonder if that is not the Emperor? It is a magnificent carriage, and there are several outriders."

"C'est l'Empereur," replied Madame D'Ouville.

His carriage was attended by a guard of cavalry, and on drawing near, it was perceived that the Empress and the young Prince were riding with his majesty. The young girls had an excellent opportunity of seeing the Emperor as he passed. Mrs. Clifford thought that he looked stern and care-worn; which might well be imagined concerning one who felt that his life was never safe among his oppressed subjects. The Empress fully realized all the descriptions of beauty, which they

had so often heard; and the young Prince seemed like all other little boys, light-hearted and joyous.

“Est-il aimé?” (Is he beloved?) asked Mrs. Clifford.

“Non, madame, cela ne peut pas être, il est trop craint pour être aimé; si ce n’était pas pour le despotisme de fer qu’il a établi, il ne saurait garder son trône.” (No, madam, that cannot be; he is too much feared to be beloved. Were it not for the strong iron despotism which he has established, he could not keep his throne.)

“Il paraît populaire dans la classe ouvrière.” (He seems popular among the working classes), answered Mrs. Clifford.

“Il s’arrange de manière à les tenir tranquilles en leur donnant assez d’ouvrage et beaucoup de fêtes, et les Français tant qu’on les amuse, ne s’inquiètent guère des affaires de l’état.” (He manages to keep them quiet by plenty of employment and numerous fêtes; and while the French have amusements, they do not trouble themselves much about the affairs of government,) replied Madame D’Ouville.

Ere they returned, they drove through the Champs Elysees, a favorite park in the western part of the city. Walks are laid out in various parts of these fields, where superb national fêtes are given, on which occasions the trees are brilliantly illuminated. They were particularly struck by the multitudes whom they met in these parks, and could not but mark the contrast between the care-worn, anxious countenances of Americans of the same class, all in pursuit of gain, and the light-hearted step, and cheerful, animated countenances of the pleasure-seeking Parisians.

In the evening they visited the Boulevards, and were quite bewildered by the scene of enchantment which met their gaze. One, on account of its nearness to the Italian Opera, is called Le Boulevard des Italiens. Multitudes of gaily dressed people were sauntering through its paths, while parties of ladies and gentlemen were sitting beneath the trees, sipping coffee, lemonade, or liqueurs. The air was filled with music, and the magnificent buildings on either side as brilliantly illuminated as if on some great occasion. Our young friends could scarcely

realize that this was just an ordinary evening, so full of gayety and animation was the whole scene. Madge was silent with wonder; Blanche and Adele brimful of excitement; and Edith could easily imagine, with so much to captivate the senses, how people could forget God.

When they returned to their lodgings, Blanche and Adele rattled on merrily about what they had seen, until Mrs. Clifford, warning them of the lateness of the hour, after their evening devotions, dismissed them to their own room.

Madame D'Ouille called the next day, with an invitation for the young ladies to come out and spend a few days with them. Mrs. Clifford granted permission, but Edith declined, not wishing to leave her mother so long.

"Remember, my daughters," said the anxious mother, "that you have had a Christian education, and do not conform to anything which you have been taught to avoid."

Madge, although not decidedly religious, had a character and opinions of her own. Blanche followed the stream nearest to her; and Adele, though generally thoughtless, did not altogether forget her mother's instructions. On their first day at Madame D'Ouille's, a servant announced M. Le Brun, a cousin of the young ladies.

"O! que j'en suis contente," said Celeste. "Mais je ne puis pas descendre avant que ma gouvernante vienne." (Oh! how glad I am! But I must not go down stairs until my governess is ready.)

"Pourquoi pas?" (Why not?) said Adele.

"Parcequ'il n'est pas permis à une demoiselle de se trouver seule avec un monsieur." (Because it is never allowed for a young girl to see a gentleman alone.)

"Quoi! pas meme avec son propre cousin?" (What! not even your cousin?) said Adele.

"Non, vraiment, il ne nous est jamais permis de nous trouver dans la société des messieurs, avant de nous marier." (No, indeed, we are never allowed to associate with gentlemen until we are married) answered Celeste.

"C'est une drôle d'habitude; les jeunes personnes en Ameri-

que ne sont pas sujettes a cette espee de gêne ; ce sont les dames mariées qui maintiennent la reserve.” (That is a strange custom) said Madge. (In America, there are no such restraints upon young people ; the reserve there is among the married people.)

When the governess was ready, the young ladies entered the drawing-room, and with a timid, constrained manner, addressed their cousin. The utmost ceremony was observed during the interview, and the young Cliffords drew a rapid contrast between this, and the frank, genial intercourse between themselves and Gerald and Frank in their own home. In the presence of their parents, the utmost demureness was preserved by the young D'Ouvilles, but when alone, their conversation proved that the espionage of a French boarding-school had not been sufficient to guard their secret thoughts, or to prevent them from obtaining information and indulgences, more eagerly sought, because so strictly forbidden.

The next day, Madge asked the young girls to go out to walk. They looked horror struck.

“Quoi, seule ! Ici, une demoiselle n'est jamais seule.” (What, alone ! Such a thing is never heard of here among young girls.)

“N'etes vous jamais seule ?” (Are you never alone ?) asked Adele.

“Non ; si nous sortons, c'est toujours avec notre maman, ou avec notre gouvernante. Si nous allons a l'église, on nous surveille, si nous avons des visites on nous surveille ; notre gouvernante couche meme dans notre chambre, parceque maman dit, que nous pourrions parler inconvenablement les unes avec les autres.” (No, if we go out, it is with our mother or governess ; if we go to church, we are watched, if we have company, we are watched, and our governess even sleeps in our room, because mamma says that we may talk improperly to each other.)

“Combien cela dure-t-il ?” (How long does all this last ?)

“Jusqu'a ce que nous nous marions, alors nous pouvons aller où nous voulons, et avoir autant d'admirateurs que bon nous

semble." (Until we are married; then we can go where we please, and have as many admirers as we want) replied Celeste.

"Alors, je suppose que vous avez bien envie de vous marier? (Then I suppose that you are very anxious to be married?) said Madge.

"Certainement, il nous tarde de sortir de prison; et souvent on nous marie avec des personnes que nous n'avons vues qu'une ou deux fois." (Yes, indeed, we like to get out of prison, and we often marry persons whom we have not seen perhaps more than once or twice.)

"Cela nous paraît horrible, a nous autres Americaines, Celeste; je crains qu'il n'y ait pas beaucoup d'amour dans un tel mariage." (That seems very dreadful to us Americans, Celeste. I should be afraid that there was not much love in such a marriage) answered Madge.

"Eh bien!" ("Oh well") said Celeste. "L'amour pourra venir apres; beaucoup de dames mariees dans Paris, ont des admirateurs." (The love may come afterwards. It is a very common thing for married ladies to have their admirers in Paris.)

Madge listened amazed, and replied in tones of indignation: "Est il possible que vous puissiez parler si legerement d'un etat si saint!" (Can it be possible that you can really speak so lightly of such a holy state!)

Celeste looked up surprised in her turn, for she had so long been accustomed to hear such sentiments that they were now familiar household words. From that moment Madge shrank away from intimacy with Celeste D'Ouille.

Thus early had the pernicious influence of a false education began its work upon the young heart; and thus firmly did the cultivated instincts of Madge Clifford repel the darts of evil principles. Accustomed to the rigors of a constant degrading system of espionage and suspicion, instead of confidence blended with moral instruction, these young French girls had learned most eagerly to covet that which was constantly denied, and had already been privately engaged in secret

correspondence with youth of both sexes, hiring servants to carry their letters, and thus daily growing in habits of deception. When out walking one day with the young Americans, on the Boulevards, Madge perceived a very handsome youth approaching their party. As he drew near, glances of recognition passed between him and Celeste, while she rapidly placed her finger on her lip, and pointed to a statue near. The youth understood the signal, and quickly deposited something at the foot of the statue. Madge perceived that Celeste as quickly snatched a note from the statue, and rapidly kissing her hand to the youth, led him to understand that she had received it. All this passed in one minute, and Madge saw at a glance what an adept in deception Celeste had become. When alone, she frequently described to the young girls how their teachers used to watch them when at Madame Fontain's pensionnaire. In the garden, in the entries, on the staircase, in the school-room, in the bed-room, everywhere the teacher's hateful eye was watching all their movements; but she laughed, when she told in how many ways they had contrived to deceive them, and how much had been practised there that Madge never dreamed of. And yet these are the schools and this is the system which are frequently chosen by American parents, in order to learn the French language, and be rendered more graceful by French polish. In America, both sexes are allowed to mix freely together. In France, they are studiously kept apart. In America, a good judicious mother relies upon the precepts of morality and religion, which she has early instilled in her daughter's heart. In France, girls are more carefully screened from outward evils. The legal rule is to deem every one innocent, until pronounced guilty; in France, the reverse is taught, and education conducted accordingly. Let the general results of the two systems be proofs of their adaptation to produce the end desired. Compare the general tone of morals in America and in France, and the hundreds of unfaithful, unholy marriages occurring there, and sanctioned by all classes, will answer at once. The actions of a young American girl, properly educated, which would be

counted only as innocent among us, would ruin the character of a young French girl. And on the contrary, no American matron could escape censure, if following the example of a French wife. The American system certainly allows too much latitude, and exercises too little discipline, but it tends more to preserve the young from habits of falsehood and hypocrisy.

Celeste and Laurine D'Ouville were true specimens of a fashionable French education. They had passed their early days in a French pensionnaire, where they had been outwardly restrained and watched, stimulated unwisely by rewards and prizes; highly polished, but morally neglected; and as to their religious training, it ended in a few senseless forms. Their code of morals allowed of lies of convenience, politeness and policy; and the young Cliffords were amazed when they observed not only the young girls, but their governess also, departing constantly from what they had been accustomed to regard as sincerity and truth. One striking instance occurred under their notice. Madam D'Ouville had just purchased a new hat, which Adele thought very unbecoming, and which she had heard ridiculed by the governess, Mademoiselle Du Pont. What was her surprise, when entering the saloon, to hear that lady exclaiming,—

“Voilà un chapeau charmant! il vous va a ravir, Madame.”
(What a charming bonnet! you look lovely, Madam.)

Celeste, turning to Adele, said, “Ne pensez vous pas qu’il est bien joli?” (Do you not think it very pretty?)

Adele, accustomed to speak the truth always, and yet not wishing to be impolite, replied, “Dispensez-moi, Celeste, de dire ce que je pense.” (Excuse me, Celeste, from saying what I think.)

The young French girl elevated her eyes, shrugged her shoulders, and replied, “Que vous etes malhonnête!” (What a rude girl!)

Blanche, always anxious to please, said, “Je ne suis pas de votre avis, ma sœur, je trouve que le chapeau lui va parfaitement bien.” (I do not agree with my sister, and think that the hat is very becoming.)

Adele looked displeased, because she had heard Blanche also ridicule the article ; but, knowing her sister's failing, she was not surprised.

Wishing to make the young girls' visit as pleasant as possible, Madame D'Ouville sent out invitations for a select party to meet the strangers. Accordingly, Edith and her sisters were invited. The former politely declined, fearing that the amusements would be such as she had solemnly renounced on the day of her confirmation. She had not forgotten the deep import of those two small words, "I do," when asked if she renewed the solemn vows of baptism. Madge, never particularly interested in scenes of gayety, was still led on by curiosity to make one of the party. Adele and Blanche, both fond of the world and its amusements, looked forward with delight to the evening.

A large company of elegantly dressed young persons assembled at the hotel of M. D'Ouville, and everything was conducted in the most fashionable style. Never having been taught the accomplishment of dancing, Adele declined ; but Blanche, who had learned from some of her young companions, joined with great zest in all the amusements of the evening. They observed in an adjoining room, tables spread out as if for cards, and were shocked on observing many young persons take their seats, and with the utmost nonchalance, enter into these games, even playing for money, and exhibiting the greatest eagerness to win the small piles of money staked on the game. Though not influenced by religious principle, still Adele had too much regard for the lessons of her home to join in such amusements. But Blanche, too weak to resist, even against the whispers of her conscience, allowed herself not only to be led to the tables, but endeavored to learn the game. Her exceeding beauty drew around her many youthful admirers, and both Madge and Adele were disturbed by the character of the scene in which they found themselves placed. They felt that their mother would disapprove of the whole thing, and wondered why Madame D'Ouville should have made such an entertainment for girls so young as

themselves. Blanche was completely intoxicated; the dress, the lights, the praise and flattery, almost turned her young brain, and she began to think that she was too closely confined at home.

Celeste and Laurine gave her glowing accounts of the French Opera, and she felt an intense desire to see one of these entertainments. A party was accordingly formed, and our young friends urged to go. Madge and Adele both refused, although they were anxious to make one of the company. Blanche was silent. When they retired for the night, Celeste said to Mlle. Du Pont, "*Ne pourrions nous pas faire en sorte que Blanche aille à l'Opera?*" (Can't we get Blanche to the Opera?)

"*Mais oui,*" replied Mademoiselle, "*si elle peut garder le secret; nous n'irons pas ce soir là, nous le remettrons au lendemain, et puis nous ferons semblant d'aller quelque autre part, Marguerite et Adele doivent aller chez elles, faire visite à leur mere, et si Blanche veut garder le secret, nous nous arrangerons de maniere que sa mère, n'en sache jamais rien.*" (I think we can, replied Mademoiselle, if she can keep a secret. We will not go on the evening appointed, but will put it off until the next evening, and then pretend to go somewhere else. Madge and Adele are going home to see their mother, and if Blanche will keep her own secret, we can manage it, and her mother will never know anything about it.)

"*C'est dommage,*" said Celeste, "*qu'elle soit privée d' un si grand plaisir, pour un sot caprice de sa mere.*" (It seems a pity, said Celeste, that she should be deprived of such a pleasure by such a foolish whim of her mother.)

It was proposed to Blanche, who, in her anxiety to partake of the pleasure, forgot the pain which such conduct would give her mother, and consented to the plan.

On the evening appointed, Madge and Adele returned home. Blanche remained, and so soon as the coast was clear, started, in one of Laurine's suits to the opera. It could not be said that she enjoyed herself, for the remembrance of her sweet mother's pale face haunted her, and she could not wholly forget

her gentle admonition. She would not, however, allow her feelings to be manifest, for fear of incurring the sharp ridicule of Celeste and M'lle Du Pont.

When they returned from the opera, Madge and Adele were already in waiting, and wondered what kept the party out so long. When Blanche entered the room, she was very silent, and her sisters strongly suspected that there was some reason for concealment. They could scarcely have believed that Blanche would have practised such falsehood.

When Sunday arrived, Madame D'Ouville invited the girls to accompany her to church. Madge and Adele, in accordance with their mother's wishes, declined, and, therefore, attended Protestant services with their mother and Edith. Blanche was so much enchanted with her new friends, and so anxious to secure their good opinion, that she spared no pains to please them. We will behold her entering the church, crossing herself as the rest did, making the sign of adoration, and in all things conforming to the ceremonies of the Romish Church. She was struck on observing so many of the stores opened on the Sabbath-day; streets thronged with gaily-dressed people; the public squares filled, where all kinds of amusement were going on. The places of public resort were everywhere thrown open, and after twelve o'clock, persons of all classes were seeking their own pleasure on God's most holy day.

After dinner, Madame D'Ouville proposed a ride to the Tuilleries. Blanche was ready to accompany the party. On observing that they were about to visit a public museum on their return home, notwithstanding the force of early education, for the sake of pleasing French friends, she consented, and thus passed her Sabbath-day in Paris.

None could have perceived any indications of the Sabbath in this God-forgetting city. Just the same gayety, and even more devotion to pleasure, was still more manifest than on ordinary days. Indeed, Sunday in Paris is but a holiday.

Blanche allowed herself to be carried along with the stream. Observing her evident enjoyment, no one could have supposed that she could have had a religious education. On her visits

home, Edith perceived that her head was almost turned by the scenes through which she had been passing, and consequently, begged that she might be brought back to the shelter of her family. Mrs. Clifford was sadly distressed when observing so many instances of her beautiful child's weakness of character ; for she was well aware that her personal charms must weave around her young footsteps many entanglements. She could not rest until Blanche was once more under the maternal roof ; and although the young lady would have prolonged her stay still further, on the following morning she took leave of her friends.

After staying a few more days in Paris, the travellers prepared to prosecute their journey, and set out with high expectations of romantic Switzerland.

Edith, fortified by religious principles, had passed the ordeal of life in Paris unharmed. Madge and Adele were glad of the prospect of a change, but Blanche was full of childish sorrow, at the thoughts of leaving her dear Parisian friends.



CHAPTER XIII.

AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.



UR travellers enjoyed their journey, for their spirits were greatly enlivened by the manifest improvement of the dear mother of the flock.

Edith wanted nothing but Gerald's society to make her delight complete. Madge was enchanted, and Blanche and Adele sported among the fair scenes, with all the warm enthusiasm of early youth.

Up the mountain side, down through charming valleys, and along the borders of the lakes of Switzerland, they pursued their way by slow journeys, always in sight of the lofty Alps, which were sometimes dressed in green verdure, and enlivened by the picturesque chalets dotted about on the mountain slopes, around which grazed flocks of sheep, nibbling the fresh pastures; at others, towering away in loneliness towards the heavens, their snowy peaks glistening in the sunshine, or at sunset, tinged with rosy hues, gradually darkening towards the descent, until the shadows of evening falling gloomily upon their base, threw their dark veil over some dusky lake, sleeping in the deep stillness of mountain solitude.

An event soon transpired, which was likely to detain them some time among the mountains. Travelling in a French diligence, they were driving more rapidly than usual down a steep hill. The postilion seemed careless, and Mr. Clifford

soon perceived that he was intoxicated. He called out repeatedly to arrest his speed, but it was all in vain; crack went the whip, and down flew the horses. Mr. Clifford saw that an upset was almost inevitable. He attempted to seize the reins, but could not, consequently he did the next best thing, which was to endeavor to calm his family. Reaching the foot of the hill, the diligence struck violently against a rock, and was upset almost on the edge of a precipice. Mr. Clifford was thrown out, and fell down the deep ravine. The rest of the family were but slightly injured. Edith and Miss Arnold flew to the help of the injured man, but finding, in their despair, that they could not reach him, they looked anxiously around for help. The postilion having succeeded in fastening the horses, was now pretty well sobered, and with the help of a companion who rode outside, succeeded in bringing Mr. Clifford out of his perilous situation. Placing him on the roadside, they soon found that he was unable to move, and from his groans, judged that he was severely injured.

Edith remembered having passed a charming village about half a mile distant, and in company with Miss Arnold, they turned back, and found that there was a small hotel on the border of the lake, where they could obtain shelter and medical advice.

Stating the particulars of the accident they returned with a litter, borne by two men, on which they placed Mr. Clifford, and the rest of the party proceeded on foot, directing the postilion to follow with their baggage. Glad to obtain lodging at a hotel, a messenger was soon despatched for a physician, who pronounced the leg broken. Finding that it was impossible to proceed farther, they engaged rooms, and made preparations for tarrying some weeks among the mountains. After the limb was carefully set they sought their rest; and at an early hour the next morning, were awakened by the bleating of the sheep, and the sound of the shepherd's horn, calling out the flocks to their mountain pasture. Edith and Madge occupied the same room, and both being equally anxious to see sunrise on the mountains, were up betimes.

The village was built upon the sides and at the foot of the mountain. The picturesque cottages, the church with its spire, the rich foliage, and the placid lake, all formed beautiful pictures in the landscape; but the mountains! the glorious mountains! held them in speechless delight. First appeared the faint blush of the rosy morning, tinging the snowy peaks; as the sun rose higher and higher, his bright rays crept down the sides of the mountains, illuminating the whole landscape, bringing out trees, cottages, and flocks of sheep, conducted by their shepherds to their early pasture. The Alpine horn, the bleating of the sheep, and the song of the Switzer, rendered the morning air vocal with music, and Edith turning to Madge, said:

"Oh! what would Gerald give to see such a glorious prospect!"

"You remember, Edith, what he said about visiting Europe. I should not be surprised if he is with us this fall. You know he leaves college, this term, and as he is to be an artist, this is just the place for him."

Edith smiled brightly, as she replied, "That would be delightful, to have Gerald with us. Perhaps he intends a pleasant surprise for us."

After their morning devotions, the young girls set off for a walk before breakfast, and came in, glowing with health and exercise, to join the family group around the table. Mr. Clifford had passed a restless night. The affectionate wife was solicitous and sad; but their physician assured them that all was proceeding as well as they could ask, and Mrs. Clifford endeavored to be reconciled.

Miss Arnold soon laid out her plans for daily employment. The girls resumed their studies, and devoted two hours each day to their mental improvement. Soon after their arrival, the good pastor of the village, M. Armand, having heard of their accident, called to see them. He was a fine old patriarch, with white hair, and a placid smile, full of the benevolence of his heart. Having lost his wife, his daughter and grandchild lived with the old man. Marietta was a sweet girl of fourteen,

Dressed in her Swiss costume, she was an object of great curiosity to Blanche and Adele; and on account of her guileless manners, of much interest to Mrs. Clifford.

M. Armand's conversation breathed that strain of earnest piety, which Mrs. Clifford had always looked for among the descendants of the good Waldenses; and she was peculiarly thankful that her stay was to be comforted by the visits of the godly pastor.

"Have you a large flock?" asked Mrs. Clifford.

"Not very, madam, for even in modern days we have been the subjects of persecution, and many of our people who were driven from us, have never returned."

"What has become of them?" inquired the lady.

"Some of them have gone into the towns to live; some wear the martyr's crown; and some, worn out by hardship and sorrow, sleep in Jesus: among such was Amie, my wife; she was a tender lamb, and soon sank beneath the oppressor."

"It must be a comfort to have your daughter and her child," answered Mrs. Clifford.

"It is a great mercy," said the aged man, raising his eyes to heaven, in humble gratitude. "They are an unspeakable comfort. My daughter is a solid Christian, and as for Marietta, my pet lamb, she knows her old grandfather loves her." Drawing near, she took his aged hands in her own, and kissing them, said, "Dear grandfather, who could help loving you?" After inviting the strangers cordially to his house and church, the good pastor took his departure, leaving a deep impression of the sweetness and simplicity of his piety upon all the party. As Marietta reached the door, she ran back to her young friends, and, in the guilelessness of her heart, she whispered to Blanche, "Won't you let me kiss you? You look like the picture of an angel." Blanche, blushing, presented her cheek, and the young girl said, "You will come to see us, soon, won't you, in our humble home?"

In a few days, they returned the pastor's visit. It was late in the afternoon, and they found the family at their evening meal. They were kindly invited to partake with them

of their evening repast; but declining, they remained out on the front porch, until after supper.

"Will you join in our evening worship?" said the good pastor. "It is our custom to have it directly after supper, before we feel drowsy." Conducting the party into the family sitting-room, with a calm and serious aspect he opened the hymn-book, and Marietta, taking her seat at a small parlor organ, led the singing in a very sweet and solemn manner. After reading a chapter in the Bible, he engaged in a warm and fervent prayer, in which the youthful guests were kindly remembered. These exercises being over, Marietta sang some of their most beautiful Swiss airs, and Blanche was warm in her expression of delight.

"How do you spend your time, Marietta?" asked Blanche.

"Oh! I have plenty to do. In summer I lead the sheep out to pasture, and aid my mother in family cares; in winter I have a great deal to do, sewing and knitting for the next year, studying to improve my mind, practising on the organ, and waiting on my dear grandfather."

"Will you take us with you out on the mountains?" said Adele.

"I shall be very glad to have you go with me," answered Marietta, "but you must wear strong shoes, and common clothes, for many a long walk do I have to take sometimes in very rough places, after my flock."

The girls frequently joined Marietta, when their duties for the day were over, and enjoyed the freedom of this pastoral life exceedingly. Marietta often had to check Adele for her adventurous spirit, fearing that she might meet with some accident. But she was always in high spirits when snuffing the free mountain air; and bounding along by the side of Marietta, it was a very difficult task to restrain her wild gambols. One unusually bright and beautiful morning they had joined Marietta in her daily rambles. Adele wore a large flat: in her sport she had dressed it with a wreath of wild flowers. Over her shoulder, suspended by a broad blue ribbon, hung her guitar,—for she often took her instrument with her to enliven these rambles.

Having reached a fine place of pasture, where the sheep were quietly browsing, they all seated themselves in a group on the green grass. Marietta had taught Adele several of her Swiss melodies, and she, in her turn, had taught the mountain maid some of her own pretty airs. Entirely unconscious of the presence of a stranger, they sang a number of sweet airs together, while Adele accompanied them with her guitar. Not far, from where they sat, screened from their sight by a very large tree, sat a young man, deeply interested in the youthful party. By his side reposed his favorite dog. Suddenly there was some movement among the flock, which started the dog, and before his master could prevent it, he was among the frightened sheep, scattering them in all directions. Up sprang the young girls. Adele soon perceived that the animal was in pursuit of her pet lamb, which she called Patsy. She flew after him not perceiving a chasm which the lamb had crossed. The young man aware of her danger, pursued her, calling out, "Stop, Stop! Come back, Tray!" but she flew on, alarmed at the voice of a stranger. Reaching the chasm, she gave one spring and succeeded in landing on the opposite side; but fell, in the effort, to the ground.

"Are you not hurt?" said the youth, as he stooped to raise Adele. Blushing, she endeavored to arise, but could not—her ankle was sprained. Raising her eyes, the recognition was mutual. "Do I not see the water-nymph of Windermere, transformed into the wild shepherdess of the Alps?" said the young man, while a mischievous glance sparkled in his dark eyes. Adele smiled, and though suffering pain, said, "That is my pursuit at present; but I am ashamed to be seen so often in these wild moods."

"May I help you to arise?" said the youth.

"Thank you," replied Adele, "I think that I can walk;" but on making the attempt, she found that she could not stand.

"My horse is not far off," replied the young man; "if you will accept of my escort, I will convey you to your home."

"I think that I shall have to trouble you, sir, for I feel that I cannot walk."

In a short time, the horse was brought around, Adele placed upon it, and his master led him gently along, conversing pleasantly as they proceeded. When they had reached the hotel, Mrs. Clifford was surprised and pleased to see once more the young stranger who had rescued Adele from a watery grave. Presenting his card, what was their pleasure and surprise to find the unknown no other than Lionel Percy.

"Just think, Blanche," said Adele, "that we should have met Mr. Percy again! How pleasant and kind he is! I don't wonder that his sisters should think so much of him; he is just the one to be proud of."

"It seems to me, Adele, that I should be afraid of him, if he were my brother; he has such bright black eyes and such a firm look about his mouth. I should be much more proud of a brother like Gerald," answered Blanche.

Mrs. Clifford found that Mr. Percy was travelling with his tutor, and that having Switzerland in their route, they had encountered him on the mountains, where he was staying for a few weeks. Taking up his abode at their hotel, he was a pleasant addition to their company. He waggishly named Adele "The Shepherdess," and soon became quite intimate with the child. Although in her fifteenth year, she was peculiarly childish and sportive in her disposition, and the whole tendency of her education being calculated to preserve her simplicity, her intercourse with Lionel Percy was frank, sisterly, and playful. Confined to the sofa for two weeks, her tedious hours were pleasantly beguiled, by visits from Marietta and kind attentions from Lionel.

Mrs. Clifford esteemed it a great privilege to attend upon the ministry of M. Armand. The simplicity of their worship, and the purity of the doctrines which she heard from the lips of the good pastor, were like refreshing water in a thirsty land. Marietta played upon the organ, and her simple, touching performance lent peculiar solemnity to the Sabbath devotions.

Shut in this mountain village, there were some delays in receiving their letters; but as they had left particular directions with their agent, they generally received them.

Edith had begun to grow somewhat impatient, not having heard from Gerald for some weeks ; but one evening, when the servant brought in a package for Mr. Clifford, her eager eyes ran over the letters, and soon, with glowing cheeks, she recognized the familiar hand of dear Gerald. Seizing her letter, she hastily sought her room, where her heart beat and her eye glistened at the joyful intelligence it contained.

With her treasure open, she ran to her mamma's room exclaiming, "Dear mamma, Gerald is coming in the fall ; he will meet us at Pau. Josephine is coming also. I am not very glad of that for I fear her influence upon Madge."

"So do I, Edith," answered her mother.

"Apart from Josephine, I think that Madge might lose all her foolish notions of independence ; but with Josephine by her side, I fear a return of her old folly."

In a few weeks, Mr. Clifford was sufficiently recovered to resume his journey. Edith and Madge were sorry to leave the beautiful mountains. Blanche, with her usually yielding nature, had accommodated herself to the simple habits of Marietta, and one might have thought, to judge from her daily conduct, that she was trying to imitate her childish piety ; indeed, her young heart had been slightly touched by the sweet example of the child, but new scenes and associations quickly obliterated these transient impressions.

Lionel Percy had parted from them, to pursue his journey on the Continent, but as he had an aunt living in New York, he promised, at some future time, to visit America, with his sister Clara.

With many regrets, the family parted from the good pastor and his lovely grandchild, and as he laid his hand in solemn blessing upon the head of Mrs. Clifford, he felt that the message had gone forth that would ere long summon the Christian mother from her flock, and he sighed as he thought that he should see the sweet, pale face, on earth no more.



CHAPTER XIV.

SCENES NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN.



AFTER a journey of several weeks, and stopping at many noted places, early in October, they found themselves in sight of Pau, a town in the south of France, celebrated as a resort for invalids, on account of its mild, balmy climate, at all seasons of the year. Their first emotions were those of disappointment; for, viewing the landscape through the misty atmosphere, dull leaden clouds obscured all the features of beauty which they had expected; but suddenly the sun shone out revealing a charming valley, stretching out for leagues in splendid forest trees, tinted with all the fading hues of autumn. A wide river, flowing in the midst of the lovely prospect, dotted with green islands, where the plaintive song of the nightingale is nightly heard, was an added feature of beauty to the landscape; and the noise of the foaming waters indicated the mountain source from which it flowed. Capping the hilly eminences opposite, for half a league away, lay the pretty white and tasteful villas, giving life and animation to the dusky landscape, where the chief features were dark and sombre trees. Beyond all this, nothing was seen for a while but masses of heavy clouds, veiling the most beautiful features of the landscape.

“But where are the Pyrenees?” said Madge, as she looked in

vain for those imposing mountains. "Surely, those low hills cannot be mountains, made so small by distance?"

While endeavoring to pierce the hazy atmosphere, suddenly a marvellous change occurred.

"Look! look!" said Edith, as the gray wall which had really shut out the glorious prospect, began to melt away.

Rolling and quivering, the clouds seemed all alive. Suddenly an opening appeared, and the sun darted its glittering beams through the cleft clouds, and revealed a snowy peak, glistening in the sunbeams. The landscape increased in magnificence; the opening widened more and more, until the whole sky was rent asunder, and there appeared mountain after mountain, each higher and more majestic, until the whole landscape was filled with forms of dazzling grandeur.

"Look, Edith," exclaimed Madge, "at that range of mountains! Was there ever anything so grand as that giant, shooting up so abruptly into the heavens?"

"Do you mark the effect of the sun's rays beaming down upon them?" answered Edith. "The clouds resting upon them are so beautiful, Madge, they seem as if they might almost be the hills upon which the angelic hosts alight in their visits to our earth."

"It reminds me, Edith, of the vision of good John Bunyan," answered Madge, "and as if this was like 'Immanuel's Land,' and these were the 'Delectable Mountains' described in his 'Pilgrim's Progress.' I think I remember the very words used when describing them: 'When the morning was up, they bid him look south; so he did, and behold! at a great distance, he saw most pleasant mountains; a country beautified with woods, vineyards, fruits of all sorts, flowers also, with springs and fountains, very delectable to behold. It was common, too, for all the pilgrims, and from thence might be seen the gate of the celestial city.'"

"Dear Madge," said Edith, as she looked affectionately upon her face, "have you any hope of reaching that celestial city? Can you admire the mere poetical sentiment of such a rest, and live without a real interest in its blessedness?"

Madge dropped her eyes, not wishing her sister to read their expression, as she replied, "I once hoped that I might obtain an interest in their possession, but, Edith, that was some time since. I have no particular interest now in these holy subjects."

As they proceeded through this splendid and imposing scenery, they were gradually awed into silence, for nothing like these glorious Pyrenees had they ever imagined.

When they reached Pau, they soon found pleasant winter accommodations, Protestant services, and agreeable society. There were also several clergymen from their own land, in search of health; and it was a great comfort to Mrs. Clifford to feel that she was thus spiritually provided for. She lived much out of doors, for the climate was so mild and balmy, that it was at all times more agreeable than in the confinement of the walls of a house.

There was much to interest the young people, for expecting to remain all winter, they were ready to form some acquaintances among the inhabitants. In the house with themselves resided a French family, composed of a mother and two children,—Henri and Natalie La Bruyere. They were very polite to the strangers, and being about of the same age, were frequently with Blanche and Adele in their outdoor sports. They were Roman Catholics, and were brought up by their mother in a very rigid manner as regarded religious observances; but the same laxity as was prevalent elsewhere, with regard to the observance of the Christian Sabbath, was practised by these young persons. Blanche, anxious to please every one, and to enjoy all that was passing around her, tried to conceal the strict ideas of her mother, and would often speak slightly of customs prevalent in her own land, as superstition and bigotry. On one Sunday afternoon in October, Blanche was missing from the family circle. She had attended Protestant services in the morning, but after dinner could nowhere be found. Adele had heard her whispering with the La Bruyeres about La Guinguette,—an amusement common among the French people on Sunday afternoon; and knowing the place where they usually assembled, Edith and Adele started in search of the

truant girl. The place for the dance was a large open space, with a smooth grassy turf, in the midst of a shady wood. When they drew near, they heard the sound of music, and on entering the wood, there was thoughtless Blanche, in the midst of the merry group, dancing with Henri La Bruyere. When she saw her sisters, she looked somewhat abashed, as she remembered too much of her early training not to know that she was doing wrong. Edith hastened up to the group, and whispered,

"Blanche, mamma wishes you to come home. She will be much displeased when she knows the truth."

"I do not think that I am very wrong, Edith. These are the customs of this country, and I do not see any use in making one's self ridiculous," replied Blanche. "Dancing is very innocent, and I cannot see what harm it does."

"I am surprised, Blanche, that you do not seem aware of the sanctity of the Christian Sabbath. Are we not commanded to remember the day, to keep it holy?" answered Edith.

"I do not pretend to be a Christian, Edith; and I don't see why I am to be so restrained."

Looking back sorrowfully upon Henri and his sister, the young girl unwillingly turned her steps homeward, ashamed to meet her mother. Mrs. Clifford never scolded her children, but her mild, reproachful eye spoke volumes, as she said to Blanche, "What is to become of you, my child, if you have no more principle than you have lately exhibited? you are to live in an ungodly world, and are to meet daily with temptations; if you are so led about by every wind that blows, what are to be your rules of action?"

"Indeed, I am sorry, dear mamma," answered Blanche, "but it seemed so pleasant, under the green trees, to join the lively dancers, that I could not help it; but I will try to do better, indeed I will," and she threw her arms around her mother's neck, and burst into tears.

"You will always fail, dear Blanche, if you do not depend upon God's grace; but my child, I fear that as yet you have no desire to please God; and therefore, you must be led by your own wicked notions and the companions whom you meet."

The fond mother's heart was often made sad by these exhibitions of weakness in her beautiful child; she saw, moreover, that she was not capable of very deep emotions, but she felt anxious that her feebleness should be fortified by Christian principles. One source of comfort was always at hand, and while she could cast her burdens upon the Lord, she enjoyed sweet and abiding peace; to Him she daily carried her husband and children, confidently believing that all would at last be brought home to God, in answer to her faithful, trusting prayers. Edith she believed safely sheltered in the Redeemer's fold. Her character daily deepened and ripened, and the mother, with swimming eyes and a swelling heart, often looked upon this daughter with peculiar emotions, in view of her own delicate health, which always kept eternity before her, and loosened her hold upon the things of time and sense. With all the wilfulness of Madge, she still believed that there was a struggle going on in her young heart between God and herself,—deeply convinced of her duty, and yet unwilling to yield, for fear of being thought enthusiastic and weak. For her, the mother prayed, and feared, and hoped; the latter, however, being the prevailing feeling of her heart.

Her absent Frank she believed to be a boy of fine moral character but on account of his levity and his sex, for him she feared most. Blanche caused her many anxious hours; Adele was more under the influence of principle; blind Lilly and little Emily she daily laid at her Saviour's feet, and looked upon her sightless child as already a lamb of Jesus' fold.

Autumn stole upon them gradually. The change which it made was hardly perceptible; but as its days and nights passed away, Edith began to sigh for Gerald, and when rambling among the pleasant scenery, often imagined the pleasure which they should enjoy together. One evening she was walking alone on the terrace, beneath shady trees, where she could command one of the most lovely prospects. She had seated herself and was drinking in the beauty of the landscape, when, looking back towards the town which she had left behind, she saw a young gentleman, in travelling dress, approaching

with rapid step. She thought the form familiar; another glance, and her heart gave a bound, as she recognized Gerald Fortescue. Instead of running to meet him, she blushed until tears filled her eyes; trembling she awaited his approach. In another moment, their hands were clasped in speechless joy.

"Dear Edith," said Gerald, "do I see you once more?"

Her overcharged feelings sought relief in tears. Gerald, leading her to a distant seat, under one of the old trees, placed himself by her side, and, in a pure interchange of young affection, they passed a happy hour, one of those rosy periods which in after years come back to the heart, like sweet music from the distant hills, to cheer the worn and weary pilgrim, when sinking under the burden of life.

"How are Frank and Ralph?" asked Edith.

"They are well. Frank is progressing rapidly, but I am afraid that he is becoming too fond of theatricals. You know that your father has not restrained him in the choice of amusements, and he is completely fascinated with the stage. But Ralph is the same noble, Christian character, pursuing his onward path, towering above all his companions, in intellect, in moral worth, and sterling Christian principle. Do you know, Edith, that I think it very strange how he can continue to feel the same interest in Madge, when she is so ungrateful to him; but he still predicts for her a happy and a useful future."

"Is Josephine with you, Gerald?" asked Edith.

"She is; and just the same independent, eccentric woman. I wish, Edith, that I could see her a useful Christian woman."

"Do not despair, Gerald; I think that her heart was touched once by Ralph Cameron, and I am sure that if she is only brought under good influences, she will yet be a blessing to the world."

Returning to the house, Edith met Josephine, who maintained the same bold and masculine manners, and who, seated close by Madge, seemed already to have taken possession of the gifted young girl.

On the following day, anxious to show Gerald some of the

picturesque scenery around Pau, Edith conducted him to a point from which he could have one of the most charming views of the Pyrenees. It was one of the brightest days of autumn, when the snowy peaks glistened beneath the rays of the glorious sun, towering away so far into the heavens, that one might easily imagine them to be almost the boundary that separated our lower world from boundless space. Far away, to the left, the Pic du Midi de Bigorre seemed to form the eastern bulwark; in the centre, stood, as a cloven crest, the Pic du Midi de Pau; between these, are heights, on which the dazzling rays seemed to concentrate all their grandeur: and these are the glittering glaciers of a Vignemonde. The southwestern sky is filled with the mountains that bound the valleys of Aspe and Mauleon, and far beyond lie the snowy peaks of Arragon. Gerald stood for some time in perfect silence, holding Edith's hand; at last, after drawing a long breath, he spoke:

"How grand! how glorious! Edith, what mortal pencil could ever portray such splendor?"

"Gerald, do you see that long, low chateau opposite?" said Edith; "that sheltered the first Napoleon; and there, far down the valley, on the first rise of the Bigorre hills, is the little village where the young Henry of Navarre passed his childish days."

The foreground of this matchless picture is shaded by avenues of lofty trees, bordering the green meadows, that bound the northern part of the valley. "Do you see that sparkling river, Gerald? It looks as pure as the crystal glaciers and virgin snows from which it rises; and look at the old bridge, casting its shadows upon the water below; and see the Donjon Keep, towering above the lofty trees; and look there, Gerald, at the beauty on the opposite side of the river, studded with those charming villas, and so beautifully shaded by those swelling woodlands."

"I never could have imagined anything so beautiful, Edith," answered Gerald. "Everything is here to make a splendid landscape: here are the bright, green meadows, gradually shading away into the brown hills, and the dark hillsides walled in

by jagged, snowy peaks; and, above all, the deep blue of the southern sky."

"You will have some fine studies here, Gerald," answered Edith.

"I almost despair of sketching here: there is so much of beauty, it actually intoxicates. I should scarcely know where to begin: it overpowers me entirely. I must get accustomed to these scenes before I can attempt them."

"But, Gerald," replied Edith, "it is a place where we must think of God and heaven. I never come here that I do not feel awed by his majesty, and overpowered by these manifestations of his glory. He speaks to me from these lofty mountains, and says, 'Come up higher;' he beckons to me from these lovely skies, and bids me prepare for the glorious home beyond; his voice of love murmurs in the gentle breeze and in the rippling waters; and, Gerald, sometimes I long to soar away, that I may see the God that created all this beauty."

"Ah, Edith," answered Gerald, "you are the same lofty creature that I have always loved; but do you know that I fear sometimes that you are so rapidly outstripping my feeble steps in moral elevation, that I scarcely dare raise my eyes so high, and am often conscious that your aspirations are higher, purer, holier than mine."

Edith had often felt pained by remarks like these, and a vague, undefined fear of something in the distance slightly oppressed her sensitive spirit; but with a woman's love, it was easy to persuade herself that Gerald was all that her young fancy had painted him.

Late in the day they turned their steps homeward. Arm-in-arm they pursued their course; and the sweet confidence that beamed in Edith's trusting smile, as she turned her modest gaze on Gerald's countenance, spoke of the deep love enshrined within her young heart. As they walked along, they were almost entranced by a view of one of those splendid sunsets seen at Pau, when the orb of day sets with a magnificence difficult to describe. First the sky assumed that gauzy, misty hue, in which poets veil a spirit; then the colors that sparkled in the

warm noonday sun gradually became cooler in their tone, and the mountains assumed their snowy white. As the sun gradually descended, he first tinged the eastern peaks with a rosy hue; then the Pic d'Ossau flashed back a ruddy light, as if reflecting the glare of a burning city. All along the ridge it spread, until the central summits were covered with a crimson fleece. Then the air became more shadowy, and the western sky fired up into one gorgeous sea of glory, from the faintest tint of orange to regal purple; the clouds reflected the most splendid of the prismatic colors, while the river gave back the splendors of the sky, until sky, hills, woods, and river were all blended in one magnificent picture of the most glorious hues. Slowly the gayer colors faded away; the sunset lingered awhile low in the red west, then a purple shade stole over the landscape, and the river assumed its usual shadows of declining day, now and then lit up by a stray sun-glance, that kissed its waves, as it seemed to say, "Good night! good night! good night!" Then came the deeper shadows of evening; and the great white mountains stood up against the heavens in chilling majesty, while here and there, a bright constellation lit up the evening sky. When the young people reached home, they had but little inclination for conversation; and in silence they sought their rest.

Many were the delightful rambles, or rides, which they took among the charming scenes around this southern home. Many pleasant parties were formed, sometimes to visit places of historic interest, where mouldering church, or shattered castle, brought back the names once famous in the world's history, but now mouldering in the silent grave. Sometimes their path lay among winding valleys and smiling hills, where the song of the thrush or linnet brought back the memories of green lanes and shady trees, across the deep ocean. In scenes like these, Edith's high and fervent nature sent out its clasping tendrils more firmly, more purely, around the one she loved; and deeper down in memory's silent halls were daily impressed pictures of Nature's loveliness, all shared with one from whom she might part, but never forget.

Even as late as November, when Americans are shivering in the same latitude, here invalids can go out at night, and enjoy the soft, mild air of the moonlight evenings, without any danger of taking cold. There is a peculiarity in the southern sky: the vaulted firmament seems to be higher and farther removed from the earth which it covers, while the moon and stars seem larger and more clearly defined, and burn with a more brilliant light, through this transparent atmosphere. Even in December, the air seemed as warm and cheering as on a May-day morning: roses were blooming in the hedge-rows; violets were found in shady lanes; wild flowers, that live all winter, were peeping out in sunny spots, and butterflies were flitting over head, although there were no leaves upon the forest trees.

As the young people were often seen sitting amid the branches of the orange trees, studying their lessons, and drinking in the sweet perfume of the orange-blossoms, mingled with the heliotrope, that bloomed below, it was difficult to imagine that this was December. Gerald became deeply interested in sketching, amid these imposing scenes, and Edith was almost as much engrossed as he.

Josephine again exercised an unhappy influence upon Madge, and would frequently have detained her from the house of God on the Sabbath; but here the mother's authority interfered, and she allowed no choice in the matter. Mr. Clifford spent much time with his wife, but expected, early in the spring, to return to America, to attend to his business. His heart often seemed softened by the gentle ministry of his sweet companion; but worldly chains are hard to break, and they fettered him yet with their iron links.

The young girls were busily occupied with their studies, and having a piano, were making rapid progress in that beautiful accomplishment. Gerald had discovered that Blanche had a fine taste for drawing, and offering to give her lessons, she gladly accepted. She made considerable improvement, and Edith had a mortifying return of her old malady, when she saw him anxiously looking forward to the period for the draw-

ing lesson. She tried to school her heart into willing compliance, but it was with the utmost difficulty that she could receive Gerald with her old cordiality, when coming from these exercises; she could feel the arching of her proud neck, the curling of her lip, and the ice which chilled her extended hand. She endeavored to analyze the feeling, but she could not. Jealous she could not be of one so young, and her own sister; and yet there was always some feeling of uneasiness when she saw them together. She endeavored to banish the thought, and to fight down the temptation, and by the aid of the Holy Spirit, generally succeeded so far as to make no perceptible change in her conduct. When alone with Gerald, she was always happy, for then their intercourse was uninterrupted by jarring influences.

In one of these walks they strayed into the cemetery, which was tastefully decorated with flowers, crosses, and other touching memorials. Men and woman of all classes and ranks were interred here, who, coming in search of health, found death stronger than the warm sun and gentle air of these sunny skies; and, away from home and friends, had found a stranger's grave in a foreign land.

Many had lain down in early youth, but more in middle age. As Edith walked among the tombs, with their touching inscriptions, her spirit was saddened, and leaning upon Gerald's arm more heavily, she said "Gerald, what do you think of my mother? I do not perceive the change which I had hoped for. Her cheek is very pallid, and the afternoon fevers alarm me."

"I think, dear Edith, that she seems better. She is certainly stronger than when she left America."

"Oh! Gerald, if I should lose my dear mother, how much our relations might be changed. I feel as if life would be a very different thing without that beloved parent."

"I trust that she may be spared to you many years yet, Edith," answered Gerald.

"When we walk here, Gerald, and see so many of our fellow-creatures sleeping in the dust, how vain our earthly cares appear, and how vastly important does eternity be-

come! When we think how short our lives may be, does it not appear very foolish to give ourselves so much anxiety about the things of time?"

"It does, Edith; and yet how we lose sight of the other world when engrossed by the cares of this."

"Let us live a better life, Gerald," replied the sweet girl; "so that if called away while we are young, we may sleep in Jesus. I wonder, Gerald, if we are careful to perform our higher duties, and often ask how we have fulfilled our Christian vows."

"I fear that I have not been faithful, Edith," answered Gerald, as he looked upon her with feelings very much akin to veneration. "I always feel, when talking with you, as if you are so far distant from me, that I can scarcely reach your holy elevation. In our love of nature and of art, I feel that we truly sympathize; but, Edith, in the love of the good and holy, I fear that there is in my bosom but a feeble response."

Edith lifted her heart in prayer for her betrothed, and found blessed consolation in committing every care to God. The winter passed rapidly away. Mrs. Clifford did not seem to recover her strength so rapidly as her friends desired. Indeed, towards spring, her strength rather diminished, and by the advice of her physician she again prepared to resume her travels.

Early in May, her husband felt obliged to return home, but not until he had made all necessary preparation for their return to England by the last of May. Desiring to visit the Rhine, they took that far-famed river in their route. Sailing on its placid bosom, bordered by the vine-clad hills of France, whose swelling eminence were capped by ancient, decaying castles, their love of the beautiful was fully gratified. Gerald, Edith, and Madge revelled amid the captivating scenery; and regretted the change, when, having passed once more through Paris, they bade a final adieu to their French friends, and found themselves crossing the Channel for England.

The fears of the affectionate family were painfully awakened, when they saw Mrs. Clifford's strength so rapidly failing. Instead of staying another winter, it was apprehended that a speedy return to their native land was advisable. Calling in one of the best physicians in London, she begged to be left alone with him, while he carefully examined her case.

"You need not fear to give me your candid opinion, Dr. Bond," said Mrs. Clifford; "I am not afraid to die. My hopes are all securely fixed on my Redeemer; but I wish to know the worst, that I may know how to act."

"I would advise a return to your native land, dear Madam. The disease which has so long afflicted you, seems making slow, but sure advances. I do not think that you will be benefited any farther by a sojourn in England."

"Thank you, dear sir, for your candor," answered Mrs. Clifford. "I wish to be with my husband and my children, and when I resign this mortal breath, I wish my remains to rest in my native land."

When the physician left her, she begged to be left alone, and fortified herself by prayer for the task which remained. Sending for Edith, she said, "Fasten the door, my child, and sit down by me. I have a great deal to say. We must return, Edith, to America. My disease is, as I have always imagined, incurable. I wish to die among my friends, and under the roof of dear Ravenswood."

Edith burst into tears, and threw herself sobbing upon her mother's bosom.

"This must not be, my dearest child," said Mrs. Clifford, as she tenderly and caressingly laid her hand upon the pale forehead, and pressed loving kisses on the sweet lips. "If it is our Father's will to take me hence, he cannot err. He will comfort me in the dark valley, and I know that he will bless my child, my Edith."

"Oh, mother! mother! what a wilderness the world will be to me!"

"No, my dearest, it will not. You will have high and holy

duties to perform, and while fulfilling these, life will be joyous. You will learn to think of me as at rest in heaven, and waiting for my loved ones."

Laying her hand upon Edith's head, she poured out her soul in earnest prayer, and both were calmed and comforted by the holy exercise.

"Now, Edith, my daughter, let us be cheerful. We must make our preparations to go in the next steamer. I shall feel much more happy, when safe at home."

In a very few weeks, the family embarked for New York, with very different feelings from those with which they had crossed the ocean. Then the hope was sanguine in their bosoms; now they felt that at no very distant period they must part from the fond mother, and pursue the journey of life comparatively alone.

Gerald and Josephine remained in Europe,—the former to pursue his studies in Rome, and among the works of art which other cities afforded. Edith parted sadly from Gerald, for she felt that days of sorrow and sadness were before her; but the aspirations of her soul were upward, and its cry was, "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." With her young feet planted firmly on that rock, she felt that there was a sure foundation, and there she calmly rested with all her cares.



CHAPTER XV.

ANGELS' VISITS.



WITH sorrowful feelings, they sought their native land,—the mother resigned and prayerful, Edith sad and devoted.

Miss Arnold saw, with painful certainty, that her dear friend's step grew daily more feeble, her cheek more pallid, her appearance more spiritual. Whenever the weather permitted, the invalid was taken on deck, and, supported on her cushions, enjoyed the sea-air, comforted and cheered by the tender care of her beloved daughter. Madge was more kind, Blanche and Adele more subdued. Little Lilly hung around her mother with ever-increasing love, and Emily ran about, unconscious of approaching sorrow, sportive as a little fawn, always under the faithful care of good old nurse.

One summer evening, when the air was mild and balmy, the mother had gathered her flock around her. It was a glorious sunset, and was one of those scenes well calculated to elevate the soul.

"Sing our evening hymn, Adele," said her mother. The young girl tenderly touched her guitar, when they all joined in singing the sweet hymn; after which, the mother's favorite,—

"Jesus, Saviour of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly."

With feelings deeply solemnized, they sat in silence for a few

minutes, watching the orb of declining day, as it gradually disappeared below the horizon.

"Look, my dear children," said the mother, "what a beautiful emblem of the Christian's death! So may my departure be,—so calm, so glorious! See how majestically it sinks below the ocean! Thus calmly sinks to rest, the believer in Jesus."

Her children listened in tearful silence, little Lilly clinging more closely as she nestled to her mother's side, affectionately holding her thin hand, and pressing it to her lips, while she bathed it with her tears. Mrs. Clifford saw that it was a time for impression, and turning to Madge, while her eye beamed with holy love, she said, "My daughter, come listen to your mother's words. You may not have me with you much longer, and I would give you a fond mother's advice. You are rapidly approaching womanhood. Its responsibilities will soon be pressing upon you. God has endowed you, my child, with many talents; do not forget, Madge, for what purposes,—not to elevate yourself, but to glorify his holy name. This you can never do unless you devote your life to his service. Thus far, my daughter, you have lived for yourself. You are not happy, and never will be, until you submit to the yoke of the Lord Jesus."

Madge listened with a tearful countenance and swelling heart, and kissing her mother's hand, said, "Thank you, dear mother; I will try to profit by what you say."

"And you, dear Blanche,—how I long to see you a real Christian. In such a world, and with such a fickle, changeable disposition, what will become of you without a strong Redeemer?"

Blanche wept as she listened to her mother's words, and resolved to lead a better life.

"And Adele, my playful, sportive, thoughtless child,—would that I could see you sheltered in a Saviour's arms! Lilly, my sightless one, I know is one of the Saviour's lambs. And Edith, to you, my Christian child, I look. It may be our Father's holy will to remove me from you all very soon, but I look to you to supply a mother's place when I am at rest. Watch over

dear Frank and your sisters; comfort your father, and be a bright example of what a Christian ought to be."

All were in tears. Old nurse stood leaning by her mistress's couch, overcome by the strength of her feelings; but none were so calm as the Christian mother.

"To my younger children I would say, look to your sister Edith, when I am gone; render to her the love and respect which you would to me, and God will bless you all. Then, my dear children, when life's cares are ended, and its sorrows passed; when all its discipline is perfected, we may hope to meet, a family in heaven."

Edith listened as though a prophet's tongue spoke to her. The words sank profoundly into the depths of her spirit, and she heard them as though there was a voice calling to her from heaven, and pointing out her holy mission.

Her deep heart responded, "Here am I, dear Lord; do with me what thou wilt, even though thou should'st require me to sacrifice my dearest hopes."

Mrs. Clifford was much exhausted by the effort which she had made, and as she lay pale and tearful, but with an expression of holy elevation on her countenance, all who looked upon her felt as if nothing could efface the solemnity of that hour; but youthful impressions are often very transient, and human hearts very deceitful and desperately wicked; and yet the good seed once sown, though buried many years, may yet spring up and bear an abundant harvest. Let the faithful mother "cast her bread upon the waters," in humble faith, assured that she shall "find it after many days." After the evening conversation the group separated, the mother to her rest. Blanche and Adele, with arms encircling each other's waist, paced the deck, with subdued step and tearful countenances, until the hour for retiring arrived. Edith led Madge away, and in deeply serious conversation endeavored to impress the lesson of the hour. They continued walking until the moon arose, in pale impressive majesty, and shedding her mild rays over the deep blue ocean, as she sailed serenely through the flitting clouds, filled their young bosoms with

tender and solemn thoughts, both of the past and of the dreamy future.

As they leaned over the side of the vessel, for awhile they were charmed into silence by the beauty of the scene. As the gallant ship cut her way through the sparkling waves, she left behind her that beautiful phosphorescent appearance, which is so frequently seen on the still evenings, dancing upon the ocean. On this evening, it was peculiarly bright, making a shining path for the noble vessel.

"How sweet Ravenswood looks on such a night as this?" said Madge; "but how different it will be when we reach there."

"Yes," replied Edith, "our dear mother has always been the charm of our home; without her, it must seem desolate. What will papa say when he sees her?"

"I have thought of that very often, Edith, for we know that he loves her very dearly," answered Madge.

"But, Madge, you see what a source of happiness her faith is to her. What would she be now without that anchor on which to lean?"

The young girl wiped a tear from her eye, as she replied, "I see it, Edith; but I have no such comforting faith. I cannot reconcile many things in the Bible. Josephine has pointed out so much that is contradictory, that I am constantly disturbed by these inconsistencies."

"Be persuaded, Madge, to give up her friendship. She is of no profit to you," said Edith.

"I think that it would grieve her if I should slight her, and then I really do admire her talents and independence," replied Madge. "I would not give a cent for your milk-and-water females, who have no mind of their own."

They had been so deeply interested, that they had not perceived that the sailors, who had been sitting on the deck, singing their last song and telling their last story, had one by one departed, leaving none but the night-watch, pacing the deck alone. Silence settled down upon the vessel; nought was heard but the heaving of the lead, and the dashing of the waves, as the noble bark ploughed her way through the boundless ocean.

Thinking that enough had been said at this time, and warned by the deep stillness that the hour for retiring had long passed, Edith led the way to the cabin, both deeply impressed by the conversation of the evening. In a few days they came in sight of New York, and it was with deep emotion that they perceived Mr. Clifford and Frank on the wharf, awaiting their arrival.

As the vessel neared the landing, they looked in vain for the face of the wife and mother among the family group. All were standing in eager expectation but this dear member of the household.

As soon as possible, the father and son sprang to the deck of the vessel, and neither could altogether conceal their feelings when they saw the wasted form that lay reclining on a couch on the deck. Extending her arms and smiling sweetly, but sadly, upon those dear objects, she received them with speechless emotions of mingled joy and sorrow. Mr. Clifford held the wasted remains of his beloved wife a minute in his arms, and imprinted warm kisses upon her sweet, pale lips, as she whispered, "Thank heaven, dear George, home to die; that is what I have longed and prayed for."

In a short time the family were conveyed to their carriages, the husband supporting the cherished wife, all the rest of the way, upon his own bosom. Arrangements had been made, after a night's rest, to proceed immediately to Ravenswood; accordingly, on the next morning, they set out for home. When in sight of Ravenswood the mother's eyes filled with tears as she gazed, in speechless tenderness, upon the home of her youth and married life.

Uncle Peter and Aunt Priscilla were on the piazza to meet the travellers. The faithful old servant respectfully kissed his mistress's hand, and in silence turned away, to hide the falling tears.

Aunt Priscilla received her affectionately in her arms, and with the aid of Mr. Clifford led her into the house. "Into the library, dear George," whispered the wife; and once more seated in her accustomed chair, she looked around upon each

familiar object with an expression of tranquil resignation and tender sadness.

"You see, Aunt Priscilla, that your poor niece is not much benefited by her journey; but she is unspeakably thankful for all the kindness she has experienced at the hands of so many dear friends, and especially on finding herself once more at home."

"Shall I stay with you, Mary?" asked the kind old woman.

"Yes, aunty; but you must not expect me to take your medicines. I must be guided in that by my physician."

Fatigued by her journey, she wished to go to her room, and looking around with a yearning expression, which all felt to be a mute farewell, she was led by her husband to her own apartment.

From that day her strength rapidly declined. Cheered by the constant visits of her dear pastor, Mr. Birkely, the kind attentions of her husband, and the devotion of Edith, she sank gradually and serenely to the tomb. 'Twas now that the value of Christian faith was truly tested. Her communion with her Saviour was close and intimate. As she drew nearer and nearer to the hour of her departure, her hopes grew brighter and her faith stronger. She had bade adieu entirely to earthly things, and they crossed the chamber-door no more. She seemed to be at all times in view of the "land of Beulah:" its breezes fanned her, its odors were wafted to her couch, its music charmed her senses, and its visions were of angels and the golden streets of the New Jerusalem; but the one glorious object which illumined the whole horizon of her hopes was Jesus, her own Redeemer, whose presence beamed around her perpetual sunshine. In view of these glorious anticipations, she could bid farewell to earth and her loved ones, and longed to be at rest forever.

The husband was unremitting in his attentions; but no devotion of his could stay the hand that was pointing her away, nor win her back to earth, though so full of fond attractions to a wife and mother's heart.

For a few days she seemed revived, was able to set up, and

be wheeled to the window in her easy chair, where she could command a view of the beautiful Hudson. By her side stood a little table, on which was placed a bouquet of lovely flowers. Her Bible was always at hand, and when not too weak to read, many an hour in her sick-room was comforted by the blessed promises of that holy volume.

Edith was her constant companion. She never left her mother's side, excepting to take her meals, and sometimes would have them brought up to her, until her father, fearing that her health would suffer by such constant confinement, insisted on her taking some rest and relaxation. Having some very important commissions in the vicinity of New York, he desired that Edith might attend to them. She consented, unwillingly, fearing that she might be absent many days; but her mother joined her requests to her father's, saying that she could easily be spared, when there were so many at home ready to wait upon her.

Edith reluctantly prepared, and entering her mother's room, kissed her affectionately, and placing a fresh bouquet upon her table, said, "Mother, that is Edith's farewell; they will bloom until I return again."

Raising her soft blue eyes, she answered, "I shall miss you, my daughter; but you know who is always with me. I never lose the sense of my Saviour's presence. It is better that you should take some recreation while you can; there may be many days and nights of watching yet, before I am at home."

The mother's lip quivered as she kissed her daughter's cheek, and her eye filled with tears as she watched her retreating figure. She had not been absent more than one day, before a messenger arrived to hasten her return. A violent hemorrhage had alarmed Mr. Clifford, and the physician had advised an immediate recall of the absent daughter. Being some distance from the city, there was necessarily a delay of some hours ere she could reach New York. As she rode along through the streets at night, her eye was attracted to the signs of death everywhere: the white tomb-stones glistening like pale ghosts in the silent graveyards; the bright lamp before the doors of the city

undertakers, burning at all hours in readiness for the midnight messenger; the sound of church-bells, calling the worshippers to their evening service,—all filled her heart with gloomy forebodings. She thought, how soon may my dear mother be numbered among these silent dead, and how soon may these unwelcome messengers be needed to perform the last offices for her! The church-bells seemed to be tolling a funeral knell, and mourning processions filled her excited imagination.

It was the hour of midnight ere she approached her home. She was alone. The pale moon shone sadly around the silent walks and among the dark trees of Ravenswood. No human forms were visible; no signs of life were manifest, save the dim light burning in her mother's chamber. But around that dwelling, where lay a saint preparing for glory, doubtless angel visitants were hovering, ready to convey a sister-spirit home to heaven. Could mortal eyes have penetrated the fleecy clouds, there might have been revealed the bright convoy sent to minister to this heir of salvation, and in obedience to their Heavenly Master, whispering sweet thoughts of peace and love, ever watching for that mysterious moment, when the mortal, becoming immortal, takes its flight to the spirit-land.

Thoughts of these celestial visitants filled Edith's heart as she watched the fanciful forms of the moonlit clouds flitting above her, in her ride up that dark avenue of old elm trees, and seeming to precede her in misty crowds, veiling angelic messengers. With a beating heart she rang the bell. Old Uncle Peter met her at the door, and with a solemn aspect, he said, "We have been expecting you."

"Is my mother alive?" grasped Edith.

"She is still with us, but just ready for the angels."

Uncle Peter preceded her to the supper-room. A dim light burned in the hall; the old clock had just struck the midnight hour, and Edith could easily imagine that its loud, impressive ticking, was keeping time with the beating heart above, that was slowly and solemnly laboring beneath the hand that was gradually stopping its pulsations. An untasted meal stood upon the tea-table. She passed with a

throbbing heart through the deserted room, up the long staircase, and along the dark entry that led to her mother's chamber. Measuring time by the depth of her feelings, it seemed lengthened minutes, instead of a few seconds, that brought her into her mother's presence.

Quietly she opened the door. Her father was standing by the bed, supporting the dear invalid, as the life-blood welled from her pale lips. Miss Arnold was sitting by the other side. Frank and her sisters were standing at a distance, bathed in tears. As soon as her mother perceived her, she pointed upwards, and looked upon Edith with a smile full of heavenly love and blessedness. Edith found that she could not speak; and schooling her heart with a firm resolve, she seated herself, with a blanched cheek, but a calm and quiet manner.

All night they watched in silence around the bed, fearing by a word to agitate the sufferer, and thus increase the hemorrhage. Towards morning the symptoms abated, but great weakness followed. Unable to speak, for many hours she lay pale and almost as silent as if shrouded for the grave. When the physician arrived, he pronounced her somewhat better, and expressed the opinion that, in a few days, she might rally once more. At the close of the third day, she could speak in whispers; in a day or two, she was able to converse more freely, and when her strength was sufficiently restored, called Edith, and requested to be left alone with her, as she had much to say.

"Close the door, my dear," said the mother, "and come sit down by me. I feel unusually strong to-day, and may never be able again to say all that I desire. It cannot be much longer, my daughter, before I leave you. For the world to come, I have no fears: my hopes are on the rock, Christ Jesus; nothing can move them; but it requires strong faith to leave my children in this wicked world. I feel that Frank has reached a dangerous age,—not yet eighteen, impulsive, fond of pleasure, but most of all, captivated with the stage. Exert your influence over him, Edith: be kind, be affectionate, never forsake him, happen what may.

Do not be impatient with Madge; she may be a bright Christian yet. Watch over Blanche faithfully,—she needs all a sister's care; restrain Adele in her wild moods; cherish dear blind Lilly, and bring up little Emily for the Lord. Pray much for them, Edith; keep them within reach of the means of grace; ask for guidance of the Lord; be in all things a bright example of a Christian sister. Do not forsake them, Edith, while they are so young; and one thing I wish you to promise me, and that is, when I am gone, to conduct our family worship. There are many helps to devotion; use some of them. Will you promise me?"

"By God's help, dear mother, I will do all;" and throwing herself on her knees, by her mother's bed, she said, solemnly, "Hear me, mother: here, by this bed, and in the presence of God, I promise never to forsake my brother and sisters, so long as they need my care. I will endeavor to be sister, mother, all to them, God being my helper."

It was no light vow that Edith Clifford took that day, before the Lord. Down in the depths of her lofty nature it was uttered, and registered in heaven; in after-life, it was nobly fulfilled. As she arose, an elevated expression beamed upon her pure and holy countenance, and illumined her soft, dark eyes. Her mother took her in her arms, almost with reverence, and placing her hand upon her young head, raised her soft eyes to heaven, as she whispered, "Saviour, bless my child; baptize her with thy own pure and loving spirit. May she be guided and blessed, and may her light be that of the 'shining light, which shineth brighter and brighter, until the perfect day.' Now, Edith, kiss your mother. I have no more earthly anxieties, I can now sing,

'Farewell to sin and sorrow;'

but ere I depart hence, I have one more request to make, and it is this: I desire to partake of the communion, next Sabbath. Will you send for Mr. Berkely? I should like to have it administered in the afternoon; it will be the last on earth. I shall soon sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb, in

heaven. Now, Edith, send your father to me. I must make all my requests while I have strength."

Kissing her mother, she left the room, and in a few minutes the husband entered. "George, will you place me on that couch?" said the wife. Lifting the light burden, he gently removed her to the couch, seated himself by her side, and, leaning her head upon his bosom, while he encircled her frail form with his strong arm, he kissed her pale cheek, and said, "What does my dear wife want?"

"I have a great deal to say, dear George, ere I depart. I shall soon leave you, dearest husband, for another and a better world. I have been reviewing all my life to-day. I have thought over the days of our early love. I remember, George, just where we sat when you first declared your love; it was there, down on the banks of the Hudson, under the shade of the tree that stands there still. You made me very happy, then, when you vowed to be mine forever. George, you have kept your vow. And then, I have thought of our bright wedding-day, when the whole air was filled with the perfume of the roses of June; how cheering everything appeared around dear Ravenswood. You remember, George, that father and mother were here, then, and dear sister Emily: but they are gone, George, and I shall join them soon. Oh! husband, you have kept that vow, too; you have made life very bright and happy to me; you have never let the winds visit your wife too roughly; you have anticipated all my wishes; not an unkind word has ever passed your lips, and this day, in sight of the river of death, which must soon separate us, I bless you, my husband, for all the devoted love of these happy years, but much as I love you, my husband, I am willing, yea, rather anxious to depart, and be with Jesus. There has been but one drawback to our happiness, and that has arisen from your want of interest in the things of God. I cannot bear to think of separation beyond the grave; and yet, my dearest husband, I have now no hope of meeting you in heaven. Oh! George, my early love, the dear partner of my riper years, do not live without God in this world."

Mr. Clifford's breast heaved, as he listened to this eloquent appeal from the wife he so fondly loved. He answered with a trembling voice, "Mary, I have many more serious thoughts than you can imagine, but the cares of the world, and the things of time and sense engross my attention so much, that my resolutions to lead a better life are often put to flight, but I will promise you to pay more attention to these things. I will be more diligent in attending upon the house of God, in reading the Scriptures, and in prayer. Of one thing you may be certain, that no other woman shall occupy your place in my desolate home. I can depend upon Edith; she is a girl of strong sense, and firm and lofty character, and, I am sure, can fill the station well, as head of this household."

Mrs. Clifford answered fondly, "She is a dear girl, full of high aspirations, and devoted to the service of her Redeemer. I can fully trust her. I know that she will be a blessing, and a comfort to you all."

Taking his wife in his arms, he gently laid her down upon her bed to rest; and passing out of the room with a deeply subdued and solemn aspect, he sent Edith to her mother. On the following Sabbath, a little company gathered in the chamber of the dying Christian, where the emblems of redeeming love were decently spread out on the table before her, and all the family gathered around her bed.

Miss Arnold, Edith, Aunt Priscilla, and Uncle Peter, all partook of the solemn ordinance; and the holy elevation that beamed upon the countenance of the interesting invalid, spoke of the deep peace that dwelt within. Doubtless, angelic visitants witnessed the touching scene, and unseen, bent over the dying Christian, and sympathized in some mysterious manner, to us unknown, with the spirit so near to the verge of the land of immortals.

Be this as it may, one thing to the believer is always certain, and this Mrs. Clifford sweetly realized, as she felt a Saviour near in the breaking of bread. Taking Mr. Berkely's hand ere he left, she said, "It is the last communion on earth, the next will be in my Father's kingdom. Oh! may my dear ones

all sit down with me at that marriage-supper; and I think they will, my friend, for God has promised to answer prayer, and this has been the prayer of my life. Will you not watch over them, my dear pastor, when I am gone?"

"Rest assured, my dear friend, that I shall never lose sight of your precious family, and that in me they will always find a faithful friend."

From this day she sank gradually away. On the evening of the third day the angel visitants drew nearer to the dying chamber, until, aware that the hour of departure was just at hand, they hovered over the departing saint, ready to convey her spirit home. Gathered around the bed, the family stood in solemn silence, suppressing their feelings, for fear of disturbing this sacred scene.

"I cannot see you, George, but I feel that you are near me; dearest, kiss me once more. Frank, come, take your mother's blessing. Oh! my son, make your sister Edith your guide, your friend. Edith, Madge, Blanche, Adele, farewell, farewell! Bring Lilly and Emily to my arms." She kissed them both, but as she pressed her cold lips to the cheek of her blind daughter, the shivering of the poor sensitive child indicated the intensity of her sufferings, and Miss Arnold quietly removed her, and laid her fainting form upon the couch, while she applied gentle restoratives. "Come to me, my friend," and she pressed her pale lips upon Miss Arnold's cheek, as she said, "You have been a faithful friend,—never forget my children. Aunt Priscilla and Uncle Peter, farewell! We shall meet in heaven. Bid Gerald and Ralph farewell. And now, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit; come, come quickly!" As she uttered these words, the angel messengers, stooping over the departing spirit, received it into their keeping, and bore it speedily away, beyond the bounds of time and sense, away, away, beyond the stars; and left nought in the chamber of death but the cold remains of the beloved, and the weeping family mourning over their bereavement.

"Take them, O Death! and bear away
Whatever thou canst call thine own!"

Thine image, stamped upon this clay,
Doth give thee that, but that alone!

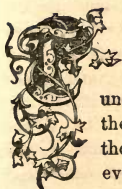
"Take them, O Grave! and let them lie
Folded upon thy narrow shelves,
As garments by the soul laid by,
And precious only to ourselves.

"Take them, O great Eternity!
Our little life is but a gust,
That bends the branches of thy tree,
And trails its blossoms in the dust."



CHAPTER XVI.

THE BAPTISM OF GRIEF.



HE sad event which removed the dear mother from this affectionate household had been so long anticipated that it had not come upon them unawares. And yet in the realities of bereavement there are always some bitter drops, which none but those who have been called to drink the cup can ever fully realize. The sad awakening after a night of sorrow is always one of anguish; for what grief-stricken heart cannot remember the first bewildered thoughts after the troubled slumber, the dim recollection of some heavy blow, the quickening consciousness of a weight of sorrow, and the convulsive weeping at the full recollection of all that has passed? Then the dreary wilderness of the future rises before the mental vision, as its trials are anticipated, when the sympathizing bosom of the departed is sleeping in the cold tomb, the melting eye closed, and the sweet lips silent forever.

These were the feelings that agitated the heart of Edith Clifford as the morning sun of a summer day streamed in her window, and she arose to shut out the brightness, which seemed a mockery in her hour of bereavement. But she was a sincere Christian, and as she read the glorious promises of the resurrection, with what new power did they distil their precious influence upon her heart, as she applied them to her departed mother! When she meditated upon the apostle's glowing

chapter on the resurrection, her heart was filled with peace, and she felt that she could commit the dear remains to the cold grave, knowing that "all who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." She felt assured that her mother was one of these blessed ones; and when she thought of the glory which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," she prayed for resignation to the Divine will, and was at peace. Hastily dressing after her devotions, she repaired alone to her mother's chamber. How sad, how desolate all appeared! The usual accompaniments of the sick-room were removed, and on the bed lay the pale form of her best earthly friend. A few bright rays of a summer sun stole in through the Venetian shutters, and played around the sleeping form of the dead, brightening the light ringlets that lay around the sweet face. It was a faded form, but there were still remains of beauty in the marble forehead, the delicate features, the closed eye, with its long drooping lashes, and that indescribable charm of angelic sweetness which so frequently lingers around the lips of the departed. Clad in her usual attire of a pure white wrapper, in the pale hands, folded meekly on her breast, lay a few sprigs of mignonette and heliotrope, her favorite flowers.

She looked as though sweetly sleeping, so natural and composed was her lovely aspect; and Edith felt as if her heart must break, when she realized that she might call in vain, and in vain kiss the pale lips of that dear parent, who never would greet her again with those soft eyes and those smiling lips. The beauty of Byron's description of death was here entirely realized, when he says:

"He who hath bent him o'er the dead,
Ere the first day of death is fled;
The first dark day of nothingness,
The last of danger and distress;
Before decay's effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where beauty lingers;
And marked the mild, angelic air,
The rapture of repose that's there;
The fixed, yet tender traits, that streak
The languor of the placid cheek,

And but for that sad, shrouded eye,
That fires not—wins not—weeps not—now;
And but for that chill, changeless brow,
Whose touch thrills with mortality,
And curdles to the gazer's heart,
As if to him it could impart
The doom he dreads, yet dwells upon:
Yes, but for these, and these alone,
Some moments, ay, one treacherous hour,
He still might doubt the tyrant's power,
So fair, so calm, so softly sealed
The first, last look by death revealed!"

As Edith stood leaning over the dead, all the former years of her life passed before her in solemn review. The days of infancy, and the sweet cradle-hymn that soothed her restless hours; the evening prayer first whispered at her mother's knee; the words of instruction by the wayside, under the green trees, along flowery garden-paths, and by the river's brink,—all murmured their impressive lessons once more. The succeeding years of increasing solicitude; the holy example of that spotless life; the gentle, loving ministry which she exercised in her household, as she went in and out among them, a living epistle of the holy doctrines of Christ. Her gradual decline, so sweetly illumined by bright visions from the land of Beulah; her peaceful death-bed; her glorious hopes; her triumph over the last enemy; but, most of all, the impressive charge which she left alone to her. She recalled every word and look of that solemn hour, and throwing herself upon her knees, and pressing her lips upon the cold hand, she renewed her vow of devotion to the loved ones at home. "Hear me, oh, my Father," she prayed, from the deep recesses of a self-denying heart, "hear me, in the awful presence of the dead, and before Thee, renew the vow made to my dear mother, that so long as they shall need a sister's care, I give myself to them. O, give me grace to live before them as a Christian ought to live." She knelt in silence some minutes longer. Thoughts of Gerald, and her early love, came up swiftly before her heart. She felt that she might be called to resign that cherished hope; and as the poor heart swelled with anguish at even the distant pros-

pect, she pressed her hand upon it to still its beatings, while showers of scalding tears fell upon the cold face over which she bent in sorrow,

This was, indeed, an hour when the deep baptism of a sacred grief consecrated the lofty heart anew to God; and when Edith Clifford arose from that kneeling posture, she felt that the rosy dreams of youth were fading from her sight. A cross lay in the path once strewn with flowers; and with a youthful Christian's fortitude she took it up, pressed it to her bosom, and with eyes raised to heaven, she implored a Father's blessing. There are seasons in the history of every human heart, when, under the discipline of trial, in one short hour the character undergoes, as it were, almost a second renewal, in the waters of the baptism of grief. Such an hour was this to Edith Clifford. She could be no more what she had been; the light-heartedness of youth had vanished before the dawning of that high and holy self-denial, which henceforth marked her daily life.

So deeply was she engrossed by her thoughts, that she had not perceived dear old nurse, who had entered without her knowledge, now standing silently by her side. Leaning over the form which she had loved almost as her own child, while tears rained over her aged checks, she said, "O, Miss Edith! what we have lost! How can I bear to go into her room again? I was the first to take her in my arms when she drew her infant breath. I nursed her through all her sweet childhood. I held her when she was baptized. I stood by her on the day of confirmation. I helped to dress her for the wedding-day,—O, what a sweet bride she was! They say that Blanche is beautiful as an angel; but she is not so sweet as my lovely Mary was, on that bright and happy day. These aged arms have nursed all her dear children. I watched her last breath, and saw her leave us for the skies; and I must dress her for the grave—shan't I, dear Miss Edith? Let me touch her last; do not let a stranger's hand come near her."

"You shall have your wish, dear nurse," replied Edith. "I could not bear any one else to perform these offices for her."

"I can never tell you, Miss Edith, what a dear, sweet, affec-

tionate child she was,—always so good to her loving old nurse. I think that she must have been one of those, sanctified from the very day of her birth, for she always seemed to me like a Christian; but I hope to meet her in heaven. I trust in the same Saviour; and many are the sweet talks we have had about our home in the heavens.”

After a few more affectionate words, the faithful old nurse led Edith to her room, persuaded her to lie down, and sat by her bed repeating comforting passages from the Bible, bathing her aching head, and ministering to her wants in all those nameless ways so precious to a suffering heart. She was one of those household blessings, spoken of as performing her duties “in singleness of heart; as to the Lord, and not to men;” and even in the humble capacity of a domestic, received from all the respect and love which she so richly merited.

On the second day after Mrs. Clifford’s death, Mrs. Morris and her family arrived, dressed in very fashionable mourning. She avoided her sister’s chamber, visiting it but once, for the sight of death was unwelcome to her worldly spirit. Nor would she allow her daughters to visit the room, as she said it would only make them gloomy. She felt herself sadly at a loss in her ignorant endeavors to comfort the heart of her niece.

“I would not grieve, Edith,” said she; “your mother was always a very good woman, she never did any harm in the world, and I dare say that she is in heaven, if anybody is there.”

“Do not talk so, dear aunt,” replied Edith. “My dear mother’s hopes were all anchored in the rock Christ Jesus; that was the only ground of her peace.”

“You do not pretend to say that your mother was a sinner?”

“Dear mamma had a very humble opinion of herself, aunt. She tried herself by the spirituality of God’s law, which condemns the most holy. All her goodness was divine; this she realized constantly, and always gave the glory of her salvation wholly to the Lord Jesus.”

Her cousins liked to hear the account which Edith gave of her mother's departure, and secretly thought that there must be something in that religion which could so sweetly comfort in the hour of death. On the third day, a ring at the front door announced the arrival of a stranger, and Uncle Peter came up to say that Mr. Cameron was down stairs, and had asked for Miss Edith. Not wishing to treat him as a stranger, Edith went to the drawing-room to receive him. She had not seen him for nearly two years. Having completed his college course, while they were absent in Europe, he had been ever since travelling, and having just returned, he had heard of Mrs. Clifford's death, and had hastened to offer his condolence to the afflicted family.

He had greatly improved, and was a fine, noble-looking young man, with a manly bearing. His eagle eye and firm lip spoke of strong resolve, and his whole manner of a frank and fearless character. But when he arose to meet Edith, in her mourning garb, the melting of his eye and the quivering of his lip spoke of a heart full of Christian sympathy.

"I need not say, Miss Clifford, that I sympathize with you in this hour of sorrow. You know how I valued your dear mother, and I can imagine something of what you have suffered, for I have passed through the same heavy trial."

After some minutes spent in serious conversation, Ralph inquired for the family, and especially for Madge. "Can I see her, Miss Clifford?"

"I will send her to you," replied Edith, and leaving the room, she had some difficulty in persuading Madge to go to the drawing-room.

Two years had made a great change in Madge. She was no longer a child. The then swarthy little girl had given place to the interesting young maiden. Her figure, though small, was graceful. Her complexion had lost its sallowness, and a rich coloring imparted new brilliancy to those lustrous eyes, now more beautiful than ever, lit up, as they were, by the fire of a sparkling intellect. One could almost imagine that they emitted rays of light when animated. But on this occasion,

when under the influence of grief, their melting tenderness touched the heart of Ralph Cameron, as he respectfully and kindly met the young girl. 'Tis true, that the want of regularity in her features made it impossible to call her beautiful; but the rich, dark hair, fine teeth, and variable expression, made hers always an interesting face.

Ralph felt, in the modest reserve with which she advanced to meet her old friend, that she was no longer a child, but a youthful maiden, on the very borders of dream-land, shrinking with intuitive and graceful modesty from his cordial greeting. In former days, he would have taken the little hand, led her to a seat by his side, and called her Madge; but now he seated himself at some distance, and addressed her kindly, but somewhat formally, as Miss Margaret. Their talk was of the departed, and Ralph took advantage of the softened mood of her spirit to remark upon the blessedness of those hopes which sustain the dying Christian. He was grieved to find that the shadow still shrouded her spirit, and feared that the influence of Josephine Fortescue was yet in the ascendant.

He remained with the family until after the funeral, which took place on the fourth day. The sad morning at last arrived when the precious remains were to be removed from their sight. Their good pastor, Mr. Berkely, had been unremitting in his attentions during the whole of their affliction. On this sad morning he came at an early hour, and by his kind counsels and earnest prayers strengthened them for the last duty which remained. When coming in sight of the old village churchyard, where reposed the remains of the Ravenswood family, the solemn tolling of the church-bells struck upon the hearts of the bereaved with that sad melody, which seems to say, "Farewell, farewell, farewell!" To Edith's heart it spoke of hope and reunion in heaven; to Madge, of the gloomy, and dreary grave, and the uncertain future. As the sound came borne to Edith on the fitful breeze, sometimes swelling up to heaven and then faintly dying away, they soothed, instead of depressing her spirit; for she could well apply the sentiment of the following lines to her sainted mother:

"Soft the bell, for saints departed,
Hopeful tolls their funeral knell:
Comforting the broken-hearted:
Rest in Jesus tolls the bell.
Rest in Jesus,
Seems upon the air to swell."

Inexpressibly sweet were the sublime passages with which their good pastor committed the precious dust to the tomb, in the hope of a joyful resurrection; and in the grave-yard of old St. John's, by the side of her sleeping family, they left the seeds of immortality.

On the evening of the day after the funeral, Edith remembered her promise to her dying mother, and, with trembling heart, rang the bell at the usual time of evening prayer. The servants looked on, wondering at their young mistress, and when all assembled in the library except the father, she looked around with consternation, for there sat Ralph Cameron, and her worldly aunt and cousins. How could she possibly conduct such a service, in their presence? she whispered a word to Ralph, who kindly assented to her proposal. Then, with a solemn manner, she acquainted her family with her mother's last injunction, and added, "All who love the memory of our dear mother will respect her last request, and will always be present on these occasions, morning and evening." Then, with a quivering lip and trembling voice, she read a portion of the Scriptures, and, as all bowed down before the Lord, Ralph Cameron consecrated this family altar by an earnest, fervent prayer, and while he supplicated for strength and wisdom for the youthful head of this family, she felt her heart strengthened for her new duties.

Ere Ralph took his departure, he sought an opportunity of conversing freely with Madge. It was for some days ere he could find her alone, but one evening, strolling about among the grounds, he observed the object of his search, reading very intently, in one of the summer-houses. Ere she was aware of his approach, he was by her side. Hastily putting by her book, she appeared at first embarrassed.

"What are you reading, Miss Margaret?" asked Ralph,

"A book, lent me by a friend," answered Madge.

"May I not see it?"

"Oh, certainly, I have no objection."

"My young friend, this is not a proper book for you; it may greatly shake your faith," answered Ralph, as he quietly took possession of the volume.

"Will you please hand it to me, Mr. Cameron?" said the young girl, with a kindling eye.

"No, Miss Margaret, excuse me, I shall hand it to your sister; she is your appointed gardian, and will do just what your mother would have done,—banish the book from her family."

"You are really taking a great liberty, Mr. Cameron," replied the young girl, haughtily. "I am not a child, now."

"That is true; but, even though you were thirty, instead of seventeen, I should remove poison from your reach."

"It seems very cowardly, Mr. Cameron, to be unwilling to read the arguments of these philanthropists. If you are so sure of your cause, I should suppose that you would be willing to read anything."

"Will you tell me, Miss Margaret, what they propose to give us in the place of the Bible? If they wish to overthrow it, what better book can they send to us?" inquired Ralph.

Madge looked somewhat perplexed, as she replied, "I have never thought of that, Mr. Cameron; that is a serious question to answer."

Leaving the subject, with this suggestion, he remained firm in his determination to give the infidel book into the hands of Edith; and, although the proud nature of Madge Clifford writhed under the assumption of authority, something of her old feeling of submission returned, as she bowed beneath his strength, and felt assured of the pure friendship which dictated the action. As they walked back to the house, Madge was very thoughtful, and Ralph perceived that a tear trembled in her eye, as she turned to go to her room. Arriving there, she sat down by the side of her table, and leaning her head upon her hands and closing her eyes, she thought long and earnestly

upon the subject of their conversation. Instead, however, of turning to the word of God for instruction, and to the Spirit of God for light, she opened one of those dangerous books with which Josephine had supplied her, and was soon lost in the maze of darkness and bewilderment in which they shrouded her soul. Poor Madge! weary days of wandering through tangled thickets and many a sad plunge in the Valley of Despond are before you; and yet, there was one silver thread just trembling before her vision when Ralph had asked her the one important question. Could she but have followed that friendly clue and gone to God's holy word for the answer, many hours of anguish might have been saved to the poor misguided girl.

In a few days, Ralph took leave of her, with the promise, that she would answer his letters. As soon as possible, Edith made all the family regulations, conforming entirely to her mother's plans. For a while, all went on smoothly. Having so many cares, she had left the school-room, but devoted a portion of each day to her mental improvement. She had laid by the harp, and for some months could not bear to uncover the instrument, it was so much associated with her mother, Edith was a fine performer, and had beguiled many a sad hour, so long as her parent visited the drawing-room. Now, the harp stood silent, in a corner of the closed room.

The care of the family had fallen upon Edith at a very critical and trying period. Frank, being but one year younger than Edith, could only be reached through the power of silent influence; Madge, nearly seventeen, was no longer a child, and, with her strong will and self-reliant spirit, was not at all likely to submit to an elder sister. Blanche and Adele were now fifteen, and their sister trembled as she thought of the responsibilities which rested upon her. Little blind Lilly clung to her, as a second mother, and though she constantly spoke of her departed parent, she soon learned to love dear sister Edith, and to wind the tendrils of her affectionate nature as closely around her as she had around her beloved mother. Little Emily was a prat-

ting child of three years, and was a bright sunbeam in the household.

It was Edith's custom, after evening worship, always to retire, with her younger sisters, to their chamber, where she endeavored to impart to them such religious instruction as they needed; she taught them how to review the day, and even little Emily began to lisp about the right and wrong. One evening, Edith was seated, with her little sister in her lap, whispering those sweet, dewy words, which distil so gently in the twilight hour. Lilly stood by her side, with Edith's arm around her waist, and Emily nestled closely to her sister's bosom, asking those questions which so often puzzle the budding intellect, and as often bewilder the perplexed teacher to answer. Suddenly, the child started, and clapping her little hands in delight, exclaimed, as she leaned forward, to gaze out of the window.

"Look, sissy, there's dear mamma's itty star."

"Where, Emily?" answered Edith.

"Right up there, just above the big tree."

"What makes you call it mamma's star, Emily?" asked Edith.

"Why, sissy, she used to take little Emily in her lap, and show her the pooty star; and she used to talk so pooty to little Emmy about God, who made the pooty star."

Lilly leaned her head on Edith's shoulder, as she said, "I cannot see the star, sister, but I remember dear mamma's sweet words. I don't wonder, Emmy calls it mamma's star, for she used to talk to us so much about the bright heaven, beyond the stars. One night, mamma was talking to little Emmy, when she clapped her hands, and cried out suddenly, 'Look, mamma, God has just made a star;' I asked mamma what she meant, and she said, that she had just spied another bright star, and she supposed that Emmy, in her innocence, thought it was just made."

Edith was greatly affected by the artless prattle, and told them that dear mamma was a blessed spirit far beyond these stars; and that if they were really God's children, and loved

the Saviour, whom God had sent, they would both be taken when they die to the same happy home. Then kneeling down, with her arm around each little sister, she prayed that God would bless them, and have them all in his holy keeping. After they were undressed, she stooped over each dear child, and imprinted the loving kiss, which so deeply seals holy teachings upon the infant heart. God speed thee, gentle sister, in thy holy ministry! Angels sympathize with thee! Jesus smiles on thee, and will bless thee.

But all was not sunshine in Edith's path. Frank was still at college; it was, however, his last term; but his letters were neither so frequent nor so open, and she feared she knew not what. Anxious to have his son engage in mercantile pursuits, Mr. Clifford was making inquiries in New York for a suitable situation. Frank was greatly averse to the plan, as he much preferred a profession; but his father, who attached undue importance to wealth, pointed to the merchant princes of the great metropolis, and their splendid palaces, and asked how many years he might toil at a profession, before he could realize even a maintenance; whereas, a successful merchant in a very few years might make an independent fortune.

Mr. Clifford, accustomed to carry out his own views, never rested until he obtained his son's consent to embark in that pursuit. Accordingly, he obtained for him a situation in one of the most wealthy and prominent firms in New York; and much to his satisfaction, he was to reside in the family of his employer.

At the close of the college term, the family were on the tiptoe of expectation. Dear Frank was coming, and his advent was always a joyous occasion. The sisters were dressed at an early hour, and waiting long before the time at the entrance of the avenue, for the first sight of the expected one. At length the approach of a carriage set their hearts to beating, and the wave of a cap out of the window sent Blanche and Adele flying down the road, keeping pace with the carriage-wheels, until they arrived at the gate.

Frank stepped out, and taking in the twins and little Emily, drove rapidly up to the house. Their greeting was joyous, but Edith was not quite satisfied. She thought that Frank avoided her eyes, and wondered what was the matter.

After supper, missing Frank, she stepped into the library, and there sat her brother, with his head leaning on his hands, and his whole aspect deeply dejected. Advancing towards him, Edith threw her arms around him, and whispered, "Dear Frank, what is the matter? You are sad. Mother is not here to counsel you. Shall I not know your troubles?"

Turning to his sister, with a burning cheek and eyes brimful of tears, he said, "Sister, I am trying to school myself into submission to my father's will; but, indeed, I think it very hard. I am an only son; and it seems too bad that I am to be compelled to follow what I so much dislike."

"What do you prefer, Frank?"

"I wish to be a lawyer; all my studies have been directed that way; for I did not suppose that father would control my choice."

"Father has obtained one of the best situations in New York for you, Frank," answered Edith; "and then you are to live in Mr. Austin's family; perhaps, if you try it, you may like it better than you suppose. Just try it one year to please father; will you, dear Frank?"

"Why, yes, you know, sister, that I have promised, and that is sufficient. I will not break my word to father; but I feel that I shall never be able to endure it."

While Frank was at home, he visited New York more frequently than Edith liked; and from his conversation, she learned that it was always to see some new performance at the theatre. She was grieved, but could not say much, as her father encouraged his visits, and seemed almost as much interested as Frank himself in the accounts which he gave of these entertainments.

After the lapse of a few weeks, the time had arrived for Frank to enter upon his new duties. Of a warm, impulsive

nature, with a mind aspiring after fame, he could illy brook the prospect of the dull, monotonous confinement of the merchant's desk.

On the evening before his departure, Edith entered his room, and seating herself by his side, she laid a small package in his hand. "Take this, dear Frank," said the faithful sister; "'tis our mother's Bible; you will see how well it has been used; it was, indeed, 'a lamp to her feet, and a light to her path.' 'Tis full of her own marks; may it be the faithful counsellor of your life, dear brother."

Frank's eyes drooped beneath his sister's warm appeal, for he felt conscious that he had greatly neglected his religious duties in the bustle and temptation of a college life. Moreover, he had formed acquaintances whom he expected to meet in New York, and whom he knew that his sister would not approve of. But taking the volume, he laid it carefully away in his trunk, while his sister's silent prayer was dropped in the golden censer, whose incense is ever ascending to the mercy-seat.

It was a drizzly, cheerless morning when Frank took his departure; but great pains had been taken to make all bright within. Everything had been arranged for his comfort; his clothes had been neatly prepared under his sister's eye, and his trunk as carefully packed. A nice warm breakfast of smoking coffee, boiled eggs, and his favorite warm cakes were all waiting for him when he entered the breakfast-room; and there, at the head of the table, sat dear Edith, smiling a sad welcome as she greeted him with "Good-morning, dear brother; though it is a very early hour, you see we are all here to eat our last breakfast together;" and she looked around affectionately upon the group, all present but little Emily. She endeavored to be cheerful, for she saw that the tears would swell in Frank's eyes, and the lip would quiver as he looked around upon the dear home-circle. "You must write once a week, Frank," said Edith, "for we shall all be very anxious to hear of your welfare." When the prayer-bell rang, Edith detained him one minute in the breakfast-room ere he arose from his chair,

and passing her fingers caressingly through the mass of dark curls which lay around his forehead, which she tenderly kissed, she said, "Frank, beware of bad companions, and do not frequent the theatre; it is too fascinating for you—it will do you harm."

Leading the way to the library, Frank silently followed, and it was with feelings very near akin to veneration that he bowed his knee, as he listened to Edith's supplications for her dear brother, about to meet the world's temptations and responsibilities. In a very few minutes the carriage stood at the door, ready to convey the gentle youth away from his home. Frank bade his sisters a tearful adieu, and throwing his arms once more around Edith, she whispered, "Dear Frank, write often."

In another minute Mr. Clifford and his son were rapidly driving down the avenue, and Edith raised her heart in prayer for her beloved brother, as she saw him embarking for "the wide, wide world." "Never forsake him, Edith, let what may happen;" these solemn words seemed again to speak to her from the deep solitude of her mother's grave, and she mentally answered, "Never, dear mother, though all the world should cast him off."

In about a week she received her first letter. He wrote but little about his business, but appeared charmed with the family, where he was soon domesticated. There were Mr. and Mrs. Austin, one son, and two daughters. They were very gay and fashionable people. Eveleen Austin was a remarkably interesting and lovely girl; the son a dashing gay fellow, entirely devoted to the world and its follies. After he had been some months in New York, his letters became less frequent, and Edith's anxiety led her to write, begging an answer. In a day or two she received the following:

DEAR SISTER: I am sorry to have distressed you, but I have been so busy lately in the evening, that I have scarcely found time to write. Mr. Austin's family are almost always occupied in some pleasure, and I am generally invited to be of the party.

The young ladies are in need of my services, and you know that common politeness leads me to accept of their invitation.

I wish that you could see Eveleen Austin; I think that you would be charmed with her. She is almost as lovely as Sister Blanche; and what I know would recommend her to you is, that she is kind to your unworthy brother. I do not think she cares so much for worldly things as the rest. I never neglect attendance upon the house of God once on the Sabbath; and although the family seldom go to church, Eveleen is always ready to accompany me. She seems almost like a little sister, hems my handkerchiefs, mends my gloves, puts strings on my collars, and sees after all these little matters so modestly and generously that I feel greatly indebted to her.

Sometimes I read to the family when they are at home. I have formed some acquaintances among young men of the best families. I suppose, dear Edith, that you would think them too fashionable for Brother Frank, but you know that I am not a professor of religion, and do not feel under the same restraints as if I were. I think that I can stand firm against any of the vices of young men, for when they tempt me I hear my mother's prayers, and feel my sister's hand gently pointing me another way. Do not be afraid, Edith. Thus far have I kept free from vice, and although the young men of New York are very dissipated, I am not afraid to associate with them.

I belong to a spouting club that calls me out once a week. Our object is to improve ourselves in elocution and recitation. Once a month the ladies join us, to witness our performance. I am endeavoring to become accustomed to my business, but it is very distasteful thus far. Give my love to all the dear faces around the hearth at Ravenswood, and write frequently, even though you do not hear as often as you write. It is late at night, and I must bid you farewell. I am very tired and sleepy, so no more at present. Your affectionate brother,

FRANK.

Edith read the letter carefully. Its contents troubled her. In a very worldly family, daily in the society of a charming

girl, having gay and fashionable associates, attending upon demoralizing amusements, a member of a spouting club, and worst of all, confident in his own strength. She took her heavy burden and laid it at the feet of Jesus, praying that he would lead her cherished brother into paths of peace. As soon as possible she returned an answer, full of kind sisterly advice, and pointing out most faithfully the dangers by which he was surrounded. She still heard constantly from Gerald. His letters were always refreshing, for they were full of assurances of unaltered affection, and contained pleasant intelligence of the progress that he was making in his art. He looked forward to reunion with those he loved in another year.

Having received letters containing the intelligence of Mrs. Clifford's death, his notice of the sad bereavement was full of tender sympathy. When Edith received his last letter she was peculiarly depressed, and wrote under the influence of this feeling:

"You cannot imagine, Gerald, what a comfort your letters are to me; for, bowed down as I have been, by my recent loss and by the cares which daily oppress me, I often feel the need of human sympathy. When I review, dear Gerald, the events of the last few months, it seems as if years had elapsed, so much of suffering has been condensed into that short period. How different are my feelings now from what they were after that summer evening, when you first declared your love for me!

"How sweet were my dreams that evening, 'and how blessed was my awakening;' but Gerald, I often feel as if it were a dream, that may never be realized. Between us and that sunny future stands a pale shadow, that wears my mother's form, and points away from that enchanted ground to the rugged paths of duty.

"For, Gerald, on her death-bed, I promised never to forsake her cherished ones, so long as they need my care. I renewed that vow before God, beside my mother's pale remains. I feel it to be just as solemn as the one which we took together, at the altar of our God, when, in answer to the bishop's charge, I said, 'I do.'

"These realities, dear Gerald, have dissipated much of the rosy mist in which the future has been enveloped. I desire to commit my all to my Heavenly Father. He orders our goings and chooses our lot; and though he disappoints our earthly expectations, he sends peace with every trial. Let us commit ourselves to him, confident that he will guide us aright. I look forward to your return with great delight, for it seems a long time since I have seen you. Frank is in business in New York. He gives me much anxiety. Madge is almost the same wayward girl. Blanche grows more beautiful daily, but is still the same weak and fickle character. Adele is a bright, joyous creature; Lilly a precious lamb of the Saviour's fold, and little Emily my bright sunbeam. Miss Arnold is with us still. They all join in affectionate remembrance to you, and your sister.

"Good-night, dear Gerald. Write soon to your own

"EDITH."



CHAPTER XVII.

BANISHED.

IN the events of the year that followed the death of Mrs. Clifford, there were not wanting many marks of heavenly adoption ; for to his own children, God sendeth trials to prune their character, to purge away their dross ; like the refiner of silver, he sitteth by the furnace, watching the process, until he sees his own image reflected in his child. Conscious of much weakness, aware of her many deficiencies, Edith endeavored, as it were, daily to realize the hand of Jesus leading her on in her pilgrim path. She had many glimpses from the "Delectable Mountains" of "Immanuel's Land," but her cares were for others.

For some months after their bereavement, Mr. Clifford seemed impressed by the counsels of his dying wife. Her whispered words floated silently around him, in the night watches of his lonely chamber, and under their influence he frequently read the word of God, and bent the knee in prayer ; but these exercises were distasteful, and were not prompted by that "godly sorrow which worketh repentance," but by "the sorrow of the world, which worketh death." Consequently, the echoes from that dying chamber became more and more faint ; as the poignancy of his grief subsided, these impressions vanished. Instead of being regular, as at first, in his attendance upon the means of grace, he allowed trifles to detain him from

the house of God; and frequently Edith and her sisters went alone. The powerful influence of his example, joined to the promptings of an unrenewed nature, placed many difficulties in her path of duty.

One Sunday morning it was slightly cloudy. When the hour for church arrived, Edith found her father seated in the library, in his dressing-gown and slippers, reading a daily paper.

"Father, are you not going with us to-day?" asked Edith.

"No, daughter, it is too cloudy. I am tired. I was very busy about the farm yesterday, and I feel the need of rest."

She turned away with a sigh, and thought of the blessed rest which God had provided, and entering the drawing-room, where she expected to meet her sisters, she found that Adele was absent. Turning to Blanche, Edith asked, "Where is your sister? Is she not ready?"

"She is not well to-day, and wishes to stay at home," answered Blanche.

"She did not complain this morning," answered Edith. Going to her room, she knocked at her door.

"Who is there?" said Adele.

"'Tis I, your sister!" answered Edith. "Adele, let me in."

After some delay, she opened the door, and hastily concealed a book which she was reading. Edith looked earnestly at the young girl, and knowing her truthfulness, said, "Are you really indisposed, Adele, or do you stay away from church to read a favorite volume?"

"I cannot tell an untruth, sister, but I really did not wish to go to-day, and obtained permission from father to remain at home."

"What would our dear mother say, Adele, to know that you are neglecting the house of God, for the sake of reading a story?"

"I don't see, Edith, that it makes much difference; if my heart is not in the worship of God, what is the use of taking my body there?"

"You are within reach of the means of grace, and are much more likely to receive the gospel than by staying away from the sanctuary. Indeed, you grieve me very much by this conduct, Adele."

"I think, Sister Edith, that you attempt to exercise too much authority over us now. I am past fifteen, and ought not to be regulated as if I were a child."

"I am not exercising authority; if I were, I should insist upon your obedience to these family rules, but I am only advising you in an affectionate manner."

Adele, conscious that she was doing wrong, betrayed impatience, and said, "Well, Edith, I am not going to-day, so say no more about it."

"Good-bye, dear Adele, I am sorry to leave you at home."

She stepped into the carriage with a heavy heart, and felt the truth of that saying, which declares that "a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

She did not speak severely about these departures from duty, but the eloquence of a holy life preached silent volumes in the presence of her household. Sometimes tempted to impatience, sometimes to pride, her heart was sorely bowed down in view of her feeble Christian graces.

But this was the day for the holy communion, and bringing all her cares to the feet of her soul's Redeemer, she realized the blessedness of this sacred season, and felt that the feast was indeed an unspeakable privilege, while the Saviour's banner over her was love.

More shadows darkened the pathway of our young pilgrim, and called for the daily, hourly exercise of faith. Letters from Frank troubled her, their tone was so dejected, and his disgust with his business daily increasing. In his visits home, he was no longer the joyous, merry brother, spreading sunshine all around him; but, in his efforts to appear cheerful, Edith saw that underneath the sparkling surface was hidden some secret grief. This state of things continued on the increase during the year that followed his residence in New York. She sought, frequently, for a private interview, but felt that there was a

barrier of ice between her and her beloved brother. Instead of the sweet affectionate intercourse which had always subsisted between them, there was evidently something to be concealed.

He seemed generally silent and abstracted. At night, the lamp was burning in his room until very late, and Edith's heart sank within her at the sound of the measured footsteps pacing the floor, long after the midnight hour. The good sister redoubled her kind attentions, but although Frank seemed often subdued by her tenderness, there was no nearer approach to confidence, and sometimes the pride of her heart rose up against him, accusing him of ingratitude. Added to these trials, her power over Blanche and Adele was on the decrease. As they advanced towards womanhood, the exceeding beauty of Blanche and the fascinations of Adele were strong temptations to worldliness; and the father, proud of his children, was anxious that they should both shine in the circles of fashion. His views of education were, therefore, all in conformity with these plans.

At the close of the first year of mourning, Mr. Clifford called Edith aside, and said, "I do not altogether approve of your plans of education for your sisters. You must remember, Edith, that they are Ravenswoods as well as Cliffords, and are entitled to the very best society; it is, therefore, my intention to educate them for that elevated position. The exceeding loveliness of Blanche, and the sparkling vivacity and grace of Adele, must not be hidden in the shade; they must be highly accomplished. I have, therefore, engaged a dancing-master, to give them private lessons. He will come up twice a week. When they have completed their education, it is my intention that they shall spend their first winter in New York."

Edith's heart sank as she listened to these words, and she mildly replied, "Dear father, is this such an education as mother would have approved? You know what she most desired was that they should be sincere Christians."

"You are aware, Edith, that I never wholly approved of dear mother's views on these subjects; but while she lived, I

did not interfere with her. Now I think that I ought to carry out my own views."

"I know my duty, as a daughter, dear father, too well to oppose your authority, but I am grieved to see them brought up only for this fleeting world."

The young girls were delighted with the prospect of a dancing-master, for both were very fond of the amusement. Edith walked serenely on, in her consistent path of piety; careful about all her Christian duties, setting a holy example to all about her, and letting her light shine, not so much by obtrusive words as by her daily life.

The mercy-seat was to her a blessed refuge, for there she could bring all her loved ones, there she lit her daily lamp, there she obtained all her supplies of divine grace; and while she maintained intercourse with heaven, she diffused its peaceful light around her footsteps. Wider and wider became the distance between Edith and her father; for as her "light shone brighter and brighter until the perfect day," his feet stumbled more and more over the dark mountains of unbelief.

She was well aware that her mother's loss had left a dreary void in her father's heart, which would be filled with something. What should it be? was the question often asked herself.

When she found him visiting New York during the winter more frequently, especially when any great star was performing, and often inviting very gay companions to his house, she feared that the world would gain entire possession of his heart. Late in the winter he went down to the city to witness some theatrical performance. The next day at the breakfast-table, he said, "Edith, I saw a very fine play last night. I wish that you would be a little more like other girls. You are entirely too fastidious about these amusements. What objection can you have to a good play with a fine moral? Will you not accompany me on Thursday evening? I think, with so many daughters, I might sometimes have a companion in public."

"Dear father, will you not excuse me?" replied Edith.

"With my feeling, I could not conscientiously countenance the theatre; it is one of the vanities of the world, which I renounced at the season of confirmation."

"Why, Edith, I saw Mr. White, and Mr. and Mrs. Linnard there, and they are all members of church."

"And what did you really think of them, father? Did you respect them, when you met them there?"

"Well, to be candid, Edith, I did not feel much respect for them."

"Then, dear father, you will never ask me again, will you?" said Edith, as rising, she laid her head affectionately on his shoulder, pressed her lips to his cheek, and said, "Anything that does not violate my obligations to God, I am willing to do; any personal sacrifice I am willing to make."

"You are a dear, good child, Edith, and shall never be compelled to do anything against your convictions of duty; but remember, that I think you are sometimes mistaken. You must not, therefore, interfere with your sisters, when I wish them to accompany me. What say you, girls? will you go with me?"

"Gladly, dear father," answered the twins. "I cannot see any great harm," replied Adele, "for we are not members of church, and are not trammelled by its rigid rules."

"They are not rigid, dear Adele," replied Edith. "I would not, if I might, frequent these places, for the service of God has higher joys than these to offer."

All inwardly respected the principles which guided her conduct. It had its influence, though yet unseen. In all things where her duty to God was not infringed upon, she was the respectful, self-denying daughter, the kind and faithful sister. The seeds of love, so patiently sown by her gentle hand, were germinating deep down in the soul of human hearts; and though now it might be said of her, she goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, "yet she doubtless shall come again with rejoicing, bringing her sheaves with her," when the reaping-time shall come, and she shall humbly lay them down at Jesus' feet.

Ralph visited them occasionally, and was always openly welcomed by Edith, and secretly by Madge; for although she professed great independence, she could not wholly shake off the power of that influence which she endeavored to resist.

In one of his visits he appeared depressed, and sought an opportunity of conversing alone with Edith. Entering the library, he found her seated there, engaged in her daily readings. Drawing his chair near, he said, kindly, but sadly,

"Miss Clifford, I do not wish to distress you, but I fear that Frank is sadly astray; he has formed some acquaintances that are of no advantage to him. I know that he belongs to a spouting club, and am aware that he attends upon the theatre very frequently. I went one evening to the club. Several ladies were present. When I entered, I found Frank in close attendance upon a very lovely young lady, whom I afterwards learned was Miss Austin. From what I saw, I should judge that they are deeply interested in each other.

"The room was fitted up for private theatricals, and several young gentlemen joined in the performance; but none with so much success as Frank. They were all in stage costume. Frank took a difficult part. He performed admirably. He has uncommon talent.

"The company applauded enthusiastically, and I saw that the young man was greatly exhilarated. I fear, my friend, that he is in a dangerous position, and thought it best to acquaint his sister, whose influence over him is so powerful."

Edith listened with a downcast countenance, and raising her tearful eyes, she thanked Ralph, saying that she had "long feared that something was wrong, and it was better to know the truth."

"Did you say anything to him, Mr. Cameron?" asked Edith.

"I did, but he repelled me impatiently, and said, 'that he was old enough to judge for himself.' He is very enthusiastic, and what he undertakes he will persevere in. He has no taste for business, and I am nearly certain will never pursue the vocation of a merchant."

"I always feared the consequence of father's course," replied Edith; "for, knowing his great desire for a professional life, I have trembled, lest dissatisfaction with his situation should lead him to some desperate step."

"You will be cautious, dear Miss Clifford, how you approach him, for being well assured that his course will grieve his family, and not being wholly satisfied himself, he will naturally be restive under restraint; nothing but kindness can ever influence him."

"I am under very solemn vows, Mr. Cameron, never to forsake him, and, by God's help, I never will. It is not hard to be kind to Frank, he has such a warm and generous nature."

"Cast down, but not destroyed," Edith committed this great care also to him who cared for her more than a brother, and knowing the precious value of divine sympathy, she "went and told Jesus." The words of one of her favorite hymns came to her memory with comforting assurance:

"Did ever trouble yet befall,
And he refuse to hear thy call?
And has he not his promise passed,
That thou shalt overcome at last?"

In one of her evening walks on the banks of the river, she thought that she perceived a familiar form far up the shore. It looked like Frank, but she was not sure. He was pacing up and down the bank, as if in a very agitated state. When she drew near, her doubts gave way to certainty,—it was Frank. Hurrying on, she found him seated on a rock, where they had often sat together, with his face covered in his hands. Quietly placing herself by his side, she drew his head down upon her shoulder, and parting the masses of dark, disordered hair from his forehead, she imprinted thereon a sister's warm kiss, saying, "Dear Frank, how can you hide your troubles from me? Who so ready to sympathize with you as your sister?"

He turned his face around suddenly and said, "Sister, you ought not to wish to know my troubles; I fear that they will break your heart. Let me bear them alone, Edith; they are

of my own making." She was shocked at his bloodshot eyes and wild haggard expression of countenance.

"Where did you come from, Frank?" inquired his sister.

"I came from New York in the afternoon boat, and thought that perhaps a walk upon the calm river-shore would compose my troubled thoughts."

"Will you not confide in me, Frank? It would relieve you, and be infinitely better for your sister than suspense."

"O, sister, you know not what you ask."

"I think I know some of your troubles, Frank."

"I cannot endure my business any longer; such a dull, grovelling, plodding life will kill me." Rising suddenly from his seat, he extended his arms frantically, while his flushed cheek and glowing eye betrayed the violence of his emotions, and said, "Sister, I seek for fame. I have talents, and I am sure of success. I have chosen the stage for my profession. I know what you would say, but I need not associate with the lower orders of the calling; but, as a star, I would endeavor to dignify the profession." He threw himself on Edith's shoulder, and wept hot tears of long-suppressed agony.

Finding that his sister was about to speak, he said, "Edith, you need not persuade me, my mind is made up. I will never be a muck-rake, grovelling after money. It is too late for any other profession now; besides, the stage is my first choice."

"O, brother! brother! what would our mother say? Her only son, her darling boy, the object of all her solicitude and her fervent prayers, devoting his life to the calling of an actor."

"I need not be vicious, Edith; I can select my companions even there. I am encouraged by my friends, and my choice is made."

"Who are your friends, Frank?"

"I have many in New York; but, Edith, I have one who will cling to me, though all others should forsake me. Eveleen, my own Eveleen, cheers me on."

"Oh, Frank, beware! You surely have not tangled the fate of that sweet young girl with yours?"

"Sister, how could I help it? She is so lovely, so unselfish her heart is so pure; and, though surrounded by every earthly luxury, Eveleen Austin loves your poor brother with a woman's self-forgetting affection."

"Frank, I fear that you have been dishonorable."

"I have not, sister. I have been allowed by her parents to accompany her everywhere. They have seen our attachment, and, although nothing definite has passed, I am sure that they know and approve our love."

"But, Frank, do you think that they would commend this step?" His eyes fell at this question, for the same thought had given him much uneasiness. "Are you committed at all in this new step of your life?"

"Yes, dear sister, I have entered into an engagement with a New York manager, and am to make my first appearance on the tenth of next month."

"Does our father know it, Frank?"

"No, sister," replied the young man, "but I wish you to tell him this evening."

"Oh, Frank, how can you crush all his hopes? I fear that you will break his heart."

"Why, sister, he has encouraged my fondness for the stage, and I have so often heard him express his admiration of certain performers, not only as such, but as worthy men, that I could not suppose that he would greatly object to his son's following that profession."

Edith looked at her romantic brother with pitying love, for, young as she was, she knew that he was chasing an ignis fatuus, and laying up stores of misery in the days that were yet to come.

All her arguments were in vain. Remembering her promise to her mother, she said, "Under all circumstances, Frank, remember, that in your sister you have an unfailing friend. I cannot believe that this infatuation will long continue. I cannot think that our mother's prayers will remain unanswered."

After some further confidential conversation, they joined the

family circle, but both with feelings of deep depression. Edith, with a trembling heart, sought an interview with her father; and having reached the library, she said, "Dear father, I have sad news to communicate."

"What is it, my child? Do not keep me long in suspense; does it concern Frank?"

"It does, father. He is so entirely disgusted with his business that he has directed me to tell you that he can endure the drudgery no longer. He has resigned his situation with Mr. Austin."

Turning towards Edith, with an angry countenance, he replied, "And what does he propose in place of such an opportunity for advancement?"

"He is going on the stage."

Starting to his feet, he exclaimed in a tone of extreme anger, "What do you say? On the stage! A Clifford and a Ravenswood a common actor! It cannot be thought of."

"He seems very determined, father. He has some very injudicious friends, who urge him on, applauding his talents, and predicting great success."

"He is under age, Edith, and I will forbid his appearance, under penalty of the legal prosecution of any of the managers."

"Do not be harsh, dear father; it will do no good, it will drive him headlong to ruin."

"I will give him all my views, Edith, and if he perseveres, he is no child of mine."

Walking up and down the floor in an agony of mind, while he clenched his hands over his head, he exclaimed, "Fool that I was! could I not have seen that Frank was not a boy to be encouraged in his love of the theatre! Go send him to me, Edith."

She advanced once more. "Father, for my sake, for dear mother's sake, do not be harsh!" and leaving the room, she sent her brother to the library, saying, "Be respectful, Frank; you will have a dreadful scene. Do not forget that it is our father."

When the young man entered, Mr. Clifford pointed silently to a seat on the other side of the table at which he was sitting. Not trusting himself to speak, for some minutes he sat perfectly quiet, tapping his foot quickly on the floor; at last, with suppressed emotion, he said, "Well sir, you are rewarding your father in a remarkable manner for all his care of you; an honorable profession you have chosen! A Clifford! a Ravenswood! and an only son, herding with common actors."

Rising suddenly to his feet, his anger could no longer be kept in check; the veins swelled in his temples, his eyes flashed fire, and crossing the room rapidly towards the young man, with clenched fists, he said, "Do you know that such a thing was never heard of? You will be the first to disgrace your family; but mark my words, it shall not be. If you are such a fool as not to be able to take care of your own interests, I will do it for you. You are under age, and I will notify every stage manager in New York to beware of the course which they pursue; they dare not proceed any further."

Frank sat in silence under this burst of passion, but nervously himself to meet the storm, he replied, "Father, I have always expressed my aversion to mercantile pursuits. I have repeatedly urged my desire for a profession. The law was my choice; that you have denied me. I have discovered that I have talents for the stage, and believe that, if I choose, I can impart dignity even to that profession. I need not associate with the common herd. There have been many in England who have been highly respected, and why should it not be so in my case?"

With an averted face, Mr. Clifford listened to his son, then turning round, he said, with a sneer, "You'll soon find out your position as a common actor: you will be shunned by your former associates, and will sink to the level of the members of your profession. But it shall not be. While I have any control over you, it shall be exercised; and mark my words, Frank Clifford,—if you persevere, you are no son of mine, but an exile from your father's house."

"Is this your determination, father? Now, hear mine; I am resolved to try my fortune. I am seeking for fame, and I will have it. I do not wish to pain you, but I must be released from my present thralldom."

"Go, then, you have chosen your lot; not one cent shall you have from me. O! the bitterness of the ingratitude of a thankless child."

"Father, can you cast me off without one word of kindness? Will you not, for my mother's sake, say farewell?"

The workings of his countenance betrayed the feelings which that name awakened, and, turning round, with a blanched cheek, he extended his hand, and said, "Farewell, Frank, you have crushed every hope. This is but the beginning of the misery which you have caused me. While you continue rebellious, you must be an exile; but for your mother's sake, farewell."

For a moment Frank grasped the extended hand, then gazed around the old library with an expression of despair, pressed his hands wildly upon his bursting temples, and, with an unsteady step, tottered from the room. Seeking the solitude of his own room, he paced the floor, in deep distress. Edith, who had heard the library door close, and the heavy step which travelled back and forth in her brother's room, quickly followed him. Knocking at the door, a hollow voice from within said, "Who is there?"

"'Tis your sister Edith; open the door, dear Frank."

It was soon unclosed, and the first glance at her brother's countenance disclosed the result of that interview. She opened her arms to receive her brother, who, bowing his head upon her shoulder, was completely unmanned, as he said, "Nothing is left to me but Eveleen and you, my sister, my faithful Edith. I am an exile from my father's house. I take my departure at once. I cannot sleep under this roof another night; it would suffocate me; but, ere I go, I must see Miss Arnold and my sisters."

In a few minutes Edith acquainted them with the sad intelligence. They all entered his room in silent consterna-

tion. All the latent tenderness in the heart of Madge Clifford was awakened. "Oh, Brother Frank, you will not leave us; you cannot break our hearts. Think, think of our dear mother! what would she say?" Blanche threw herself, with a burst of tender weeping, into his arms; and Adele, the merry, sportive companion of all his mischievous gambols, in a transport of grief, exclaimed, "Oh, Frank! how can you live without your sisters? How can you dare our father's displeasure?"

"Do not kill me, dear girls. I need all the fortitude which I can summon, to sustain me, for my mind is made up. Farewell, farewell!" and he kissed each dear sister again and again.

"Shall we never see you, dear Frank? Will you never come here any more?" sobbed Blanche.

"I am banished from my father's house, and cannot cross the threshold ever again.

A burst of passionate weeping followed the last adieu. Turning to Miss Arnold, he said, "Farewell, my friend, my mother's friend; you will not forget the Frank of younger days."

"I shall not forget you, Frank. I shall look for your return; it will not be long. A prayer-hearing God will remember the supplications of your sainted mother."

"Now, Edith, take me to Lilly and Emily; let me look at them once more;" and crossing the entry, they entered the room of the slumbering children. Stooping over, he kissed each sleeping child, and, with a trembling step, said, "Now to mother's room."

They walked on in silence, entered, and locked the door. Frank stood a moment, in the centre of the room, surveying each familiar object, especially the sweet miniature which hung by the side of her dressing-table; then walking reverently up to the little table where her devotional books were kept, he found several there still; her work-box, and the little vase which contained her flowers, stood in their accustomed place. Edith stood by his side, and whispered, "This is the very spot

where she used always to pray ; let us bow down, once more, together."

Kneeling before the little table, she threw her arm around her brother, and in earnest, fervent supplication, prayed for the prodigal son, about to leave his father's house. The young man bowed down, in speechless emotion, and Edith felt, as she arose from that posture, that though clouds and darkness were round about her path, the sun was still shining behind these vapors, and would yet appear, through the rending heavens, to light her path once more.

Frank next descended to the kitchen, and said, "Good-bye, dear nurse ; I shall not see you any more, but I must thank you for your kindness to your little boy."

"What do you mean, Master Frank ? Where are you going?"

"Going forever, nurse. Sister Edith will tell you why."

The faithful old creature, burying her face in her clean white apron, burst into a flood of tears, as she said, "Wherever you go, do not forget your mother's God. Oh, may his blessing rest upon you, and bring you back again to your father's house."

"Where is Uncle Peter?" asked Frank.

"He is out in the stable," answered the old woman.

Walking out alone, Frank called to the old man, "I have been looking for you, Uncle Peter, to bid you good-bye. I am banished from my father's house, forever, and I must say farewell to my faithful old friend."

"Oh, Massa Frank ! what do you mean ? what have you done ? You will break you sister's heart if you have gone astray."

"I will try to do right, Uncle Peter, though I cannot comply with all my father's wishes. I am going out into the 'wide, wide world,' all alone, and I know that you will pray for your boy. I am going to be something great, Uncle Peter, but I cannot tell you all now. Be kind to my father ; take good care of my dear sisters ; don't forget Lady Jane. Carlos I shall take with me ; it is all that I have left of dear old Ravenswood."

"O, Massa Frank, it is better to be good than to be great. Don't follow anything that you can't ask the good Heavenly Father to bless."

"Now, Uncle Peter, saddle one of your best horses, and bring him round to the front; I must be off to-night."

The old servant seized his hand, and kissing it affectionately, showered a flood of tears upon it, and Frank returned once more to the house.

"One more request, dear Edith: is there no likeness of my mother that can be spared?"

"O yes, dear brother, you can have mine; it has also some of her hair; I can easily get another from some that are in the house;" and going to her room, she brought a perfect likeness of their beloved parent and placed it in his hand. He received it with reverence, and Edith's hopes were stronger than her fears, when she witnessed the deep emotion with which he gazed upon his mother's picture. In a short time his trunks were packed, ready to send next day. The horse being at the door, he embraced silently each dear member of the family who stood in the hall, and mounting his horse, slowly pursued his way down the dark avenue. It was a cold and cheerless night. The wind whistled shrilly around the elms of Ravenswood; the winter moon struggled through masses of dark clouds; and the scene without was in gloomy harmony with the heart of Frank Clifford.

Reining his horse for a few minutes, he sat in the saddle bidding a sad farewell to the home of his ancestors. He thought of the days of childhood, when he sported so merrily among the green trees of his early home. He glanced towards the Hudson, and the few scattered moonbeams that played fitfully upon its cold surface, brought back in mournful echoes the joyful tones of voices which he might never hear again, and which had so merrily carolled their sweet melodies in their boat excursions on the beautiful river. He thought of the home-circle within those honored walls. He recalled the look, the voice, the teachings of his mother. Her dying words seemed repeated once more, in tones of deeper sadness. The

beloved school-room, and the kind and gifted governess of his early days; the sweet sisters, whom he had so loved to tease; Edith, whom he almost venerated; dear little blind Lilly, who so tenderly loved "Brother Frank;" little prattling Emily; the good old servants, his horse, his dog, all the haunts of his early days, came over his spirit with overwhelming tenderness. These were now as dreams of the past. While he gazed, the cold moon hid herself behind the dark clouds, enveloping the landscape in a thick veil of darkness. A deeper gloom overspread his heart, and giving a slight touch of the whip to his horse, in a very few minutes he had left the charmed circle of his home forever.

Now, thoughts of the future stirred up the very depths of his heart, but although he saw before him many high hills to climb, and troubled streams to buffet, still the sanguine hopes of youth prevailed; and in the distance he saw the temple of fame, towards which he was rushing impetuously, with hot speed, regardless of the difficulties of the way.

A cloud had fallen upon the family hearth at Ravenswood; for Frank's warm, impulsive heart had endeared him tenderly to every member of the household; and then he was an only brother, and none could fill the vacancy which he had left.

From a lonely chamber, a stricken, disappointed heart had watched the departure of his son from the parental roof. He had seen him mount his horse which conveyed him from his home, and when he reined his steed to take a last farewell, the yearning of the father's heart almost impelled him to raise the window, and to utter the call of his heart, "Frank, my son, my only son, come back!" but pride gained the mastery, and turning resolutely from the window, all night long he paced the gloomy chamber, bewailing his son's rebellion. On the next day, he was unable to leave his room; and when he did, the name of Frank Clifford was a forbidden sound in the halls of Ravenswood.



CHAPTER XVIII.

DISAPPOINTED HOPES.



HE likeness of Frank was still in Edith's room, smiling and joyous, as in days of yore, but his flute, with which he used so often to accompany his sisters, was silent; his place vacant at the family table; and when his trunks were seen leaving the house, next day, a fresh burst of weeping followed the last mementoes of a beloved brother.

"Though rough and thorny be the road,
It leads thee home apace to God;
Then count thy present trials small,
For heaven will make amends for all,"

So thought Edith, as she stood, next morning, looking at the wagon which removed her brother's property from his home. "I have prayed to be made holy," thought she; "all the trials which befall me are under the direction of a Heavenly Father. This is the way in which I am to be taught patience. 'Tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed.' 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.'

"Trials must and will befall;
But, with humble faith, to see
Love inscribed upon them all,—
This is happiness to me.' "

Repeating these words, in a low tone, she felt a comfort of

the sweet promise of the gospel, and committing her dear father and brother wholly to God, she could pursue her path of duty with serene and cheerful trust in the unseen hand.

She argued thus. "All the members of this dear household have been the subject of earnest, believing prayer, from the first day of their birth. God is true. He hath promised to answer faithful prayer. 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' How certain are the Divine promises! God does not only say, we shall have in the future, but we have them now," thought Edith. "Are not these prayers in accordance with the will of God? Then these promises are mine. God may withhold the manifestation of their fulfilment, to try my faith; but still I have the blessed assurance, I believe it,—Frank will be a Christian yet." With a smile upon her face, she descended to the family circle, and endeavored to cheer the sad spirits around the domestic hearth.

As soon as her father was able, she saw him depart for New York, with a very stern expression of countenance. "I may not be at home for several days, Edith," said he, "but I will not write to you; do not be uneasy." With these words he sadly took leave of his family.

When Frank reached the metropolis, he went immediately to Mr. Austin, and acquainted him with his decision. He was thunderstruck at the surprise which was manifested.

"Are you aware, my young friend, of all the difficulties in your way?" asked Mr. Austin.

"I suppose, sir, that every profession has its trials at the outset, but I feel strong enough to overcome them all."

"There is another serious matter, Frank," answered Mr. Austin. "I suppose that you are fully aware that you will lose caste in good society if you become a tragedian."

"I cannot see why, my dear sir. If I lead a moral, upright life, performing all the duties of a good citizen, I think I am as well entitled to confidence and respect as if I were a merchant."

"You will not find it so; there is an odium attached to the

name of an actor, for, generally speaking, they are a low, worthless class, wholly unsuitable, as associates, for Frank Clifford."

"If I prove a successful aspirant, and maintain a high character for purity and virtue, may I not elevate the class?" answered the sanguine youth.

"These are very pretty pictures, Frank, but not one will be realized. If you are successful, you will have what you are seeking,—fame; but the very persons that applaud you in public will close their drawing-rooms against Frank Clifford, the actor. Mark my words: even I, much as I esteem you, could not think of seeing you, upon the same terms, in my family. You will be welcome at my counting-room, but, as an associate for my daughters, I never could brave public opinion enough for that, nor could I expose them to the risk of intimacy with a young and flattered tragedien."

During this conversation Frank's countenance fell, for he had fully calculated upon Mr. Austin's sympathy. He knew of his intimacy with Forrest, but when he recalled the terms upon which they associated, he remembered that he never mingled with the female members of the family, and was only invited to the house to the gentlemen's parties.

His heart sank within him at the prospect of separation from Eveleen, but even that hope he could resign for the present, looking to the bright future which he pictured, when, as the successful tragedian, he might offer her a home worthy of her acceptance.

When he met the young girl, in the evening, she soon perceived that a deep shadow clouded his usually sunny brow, and seating herself at the piano, she sought to draw him out of his moody silence by the sweet strains of her lovely voice.

She chose some of her most touching melodies, which they had often enjoyed together. It had been his custom to stand by her side, turning over the leaves of her music, but now, she found that he sat in a distant corner of the room, and when she turned to look at him, she perceived that he was sit-

ting with his face covered in his hands. Rising from the piano, she advanced, with a subdued and gentle step, towards the young man, and said, "What ails you, Mr. Clifford? You are in trouble."

"Come with me, Miss Austin, to the conservatory;" and he led the way to a small room, at the end of the range of parlors. Seating himself by Eveleen, he said, "I have much to tell you; this is probably our last interview, and you must know all. I have acquainted my father with my decision: he has disowned me; I am banished from the paternal roof. Edith, my sister, is faithful and devoted; she will never forsake me. I have also told your father; he discourages me entirely, and says, that although I may visit him at his counting-room, an actor cannot be a proper associate for his daughters. I had not calculated upon this. Now, I have nothing left; no friend but Edith and my sisters. Eveleen, our sweet dream is over; we must part."

While Frank was speaking, lower and lower drooped the young girl's head, until, bowed upon the arm of the sofa, she wept convulsively and long.

"Do you think, Frank, that I, your own Eveleen, will forsake you in the day of your adversity?" Raising her head, and proudly throwing back the luxuriant ringlets which shaded her lovely face, an expression of joy almost beamed in her expressive eyes, as she continued, "I am proud of you, Frank. I shall see the day when your name will stand enrolled in the annals of fame, and do you think that, for a mere prejudice, I shall forsake you? No, no; you do not know your Eveleen, if you can imagine for one moment that aught but death can part thee and me; that is, Frank, so long as you maintain a character for purity, integrity, and moral worth. Cast off by all but thee, and only thee, to bear the burden of life, I ask no higher destiny."

"Oh, Eveleen! you wring my heart; such devotion, such noble forgetfulness of self, is not for me. I cannot, I dare not accept the precious sacrifice; I should despise myself if I did."

"What do you mean, Frank?" asked the young girl.

"I mean, Eveleen, that I must not seek your dear society. If I cannot openly visit you at your father's house, it must not be clandestinely; we must wait for brighter days."

"And do you really mean to leave me all alone? And are you going to meet the world, and endure all the trials of your lot, without an earthly comforter?"

"Oh, Eveleen! Eveleen! do not tempt me any farther; I am but human."

The romantic devotion of the sweet young girl almost overpowered the better judgment of Frank Clifford; but so far, he remained proof against her tender expostulations. Under the influence of a religious education, what might this young girl have been? But here we behold her guided by false views. Instead of using her power to restrain her friend from paths of folly and irreligion, actually encouraging him to persevere, and holding out the sweet reward of her love at last. Woe to the mother who could sow such seeds!

"They may forbid your visits, Frank; they may shut me up for fear that we may meet, but they will never change my heart, or wring from me a renunciation of my dearest earthly hopes."

"I shall see you again, Eveleen, for it may be some weeks ere all is arranged; until I am a banished man, I shall see you as often as I can."

The arrival of company in the front parlor warned them to leave their retirement; but as Eveleen arose, some sweet blossoms from the conservatory fell from her hair, and Frank stooping, picked them up, and pressing them to his lips, placed them safely in the button-hole of his coat, while Eveleen's soft eyes danced with delight at this little act of tenderness.

Meanwhile, Mr. Clifford was busily engaged in his mission to New York. Going round to all the public places, he tore down every placard which announced his son's debut; then calling on the managers of all the theatres, he warned them, on the penalty of prosecution, not to engage his son's services

while a minor; consequently, Frank was disappointed. But, determined not to be defeated, he made preparations to join a strolling company that were going into a country town in the interior of Pennsylvania.

On the night before his departure, he called at Mr. Austin's, and was kindly received: as, knowing of Mr. Clifford's resolute course, Mr. Austin supposed that all was at an end. But he had miscalculated the strength of Frank's character. Ere leaving for the evening, he contrived to lead Eveleen into the small room, and sitting out of sight of her family, he communicated the news of his departure.

She could with difficulty conceal her emotion. A few hurried words of farewell, a first respectful kiss, imprinted frantically upon her forehead, and Frank was gone. Pleading headache, Eveleen rushed to her room, and there opened the flood-gates of her grief. Opening her bureau-drawer, she took out the dear picture of the one she loved, and pressing it to her lips, gazed long upon its speaking features. From that evening she drooped; her interest in all her usual pursuits declined visibly; her eye lost its brilliancy, her cheek its bloom, her step its lightness. Her family were distressed at the change, for she was a darling idol at home. Her mother, who had watched her carefully, guessed her secret, and pitied her infatuation. Mr. Austin was not so sharp-sighted.

After Frank had been absent some months, Mr. Austin, seated at the breakfast-table one morning, picked up one of the morning papers, and glancing hastily over it, said, "What have we here? The first appearance of a young man, of high family connections, at the Broadway Theatre, in the character of Hamlet. Known to a large circle in New York, it will afford his friends much pleasure to hear that Mr. Clifford makes his debut on Thursday evening. We predict for him a brilliant course."

Mrs. Austin stole a glance at Eveleen. First flushing crimson, then ashy pale, she observed her falling, and crossed the room just in time to receive her fainting form in her arms. Laying her gently on a sofa, the usual restoratives were ap-

plied, without success, for a long time; at length she languidly opened her eyes, and said, "Take me, mother, to my own room, and leave me there; I shall soon be better."

Sadly the mother saw her drooping flower carried by her father up-stairs, her fair head leaning over his shoulder, and her luxuriant hair falling in long ringlets over her slender figure. When she was laid upon the bed, Mrs. Austin locked the door, and, with a mother's tenderness, seated herself by her side.

"Don't stay, mother; if I could sleep awhile I should soon feel better."

"No, my dear; I shall not leave you, Eveleen. Look at your mother, and tell me, dearest, is there not some mental anguish preying upon you?"

Eveleen turned her face to the wall and moaned piteously, "Mother, I can bear it; don't ask me such a question."

"Eveleen, I know your secret; you have long loved Frank Clifford. Ever since he left us you have been pining, and I cannot see my child fading so hopelessly."

Eveleen, turning suddenly around, looked at her mother's face, and seeing nothing there but pitying love, threw herself upon her bosom, and murmured, "Mother, dear mother, you will not despise me for loving him, will you? Oh, do not blame him; we are neither of us to blame, but he least. How could it be otherwise? How could we be thrown so much together, and not learn to love? But, mother, we are under no engagement; we only love each other, that is all, and hopelessly, dear mother. Frank will not see me clandestinely. He still hopes for better days. He hopes that when his fame is established you may not scorn him always."

The mother's heart was overpowered by this touching appeal, but she replied, "Eveleen, try to banish his image from your heart; your father will never listen to such a thing, so long as he is on the stage."

"I know it, dear mother, but I cannot cease to love him. He is not a common young man; he has no vices, and I don't see why people should despise his profession."

Seeing the excited state of the young girl, her mother said no more at present, but inwardly resolved that nothing should induce her to sacrifice her child to a mere stage performer, though he were one of the most brilliant stars.

When the father was acquainted with the facts, he angrily reproached Frank for his abuse of their hospitality, and mourned bitterly over the ruin of his daughter's happiness. Lavishing upon Eveleen every indulgence, he hoped, by redoubled kindness, to banish the remembrance of Frank Clifford; but he had not measured the depth of a woman's love if he thought that toys could efface memories lasting as life. Eveleen, knowing Mr. Clifford's resolute course, wondered how Frank could now appear upon the New York boards. The truth was, that finding he had joined a company of strolling players, he had left him to his fate.

Curious to know how Frank would be received, Mr. Austin went among the crowd to witness his first appearance. It was pronounced by all the critics to be a great success for one so young, although many feared that his voice had not sufficient power for strong passions.

Eveleen watched the papers eagerly, and read in her own room, with a burning cheek and glistening eye, the accounts of his success. She longed to see him on his next appearance, and wondered how she could bring about her earnest desire. Not accustomed to very rigid ideas of principle, she thought over the matter, and was busy in planning how she could accomplish her end.

She had some intimate friends living not far from her who frequented the theatre; she was nearly certain that they would go to see Frank. Asking permission to spend the day with them, her mother was pleased to see her go out. To her great joy, she found that the family were all going, and never having been denied these amusements, she made one of the party.

It may be well imagined with what eager tumultuous delight she witnessed his second performance of Hamlet. She rejoiced in his success. The plaudits of the house awoke deep echoes

of joy in her young heart. Their box was near the stage. She had brought a bouquet, which she determined, if possible, to throw upon the stage. At the close of the second act, he passed near her box. Raising his eyes suddenly, he recognized Eveleen; a flush of joy passed over his features. The bouquet was quickly thrown, and Eveleen was made happy for that evening by seeing the quickness with which he caught the flowers, and sent back a bright smile as he hastily kissed his hand to the young girl, receiving the same sweet token of recognition in return. On entering his room, he found something tied around the bouquet. Unwinding the string, a strip of paper fell out, on which was written, "From Eveleen, unchanged."

The pure devotion of the young girl touched his heart, but his principles were yet too upright to seek her society. Hope painted a picture in the future, when sweet Eveleen Austin should be the partner of all his success and prosperity. Many were deeply interested in the young man, and, true to their views of Christian duty, sought to win him back to paths of respectability and honor. One morning, a message came up to his room that a gentleman wished to see him, and descending, he found his good pastor, Mr. Berkely, in the parlor.

Advancing, he kindly took the young man's hand, and said, "Dear Frank, I cannot see you departing so far from the teachings of your early days, without making an effort to reclaim you. I cannot tell you with what pain I have heard the intelligence, that Mrs. Clifford's only and cherished son had chosen such a lot as yours."

Frank listened attentively, but replied, "Mr. Berkely, I do not see that it follows, necessarily, that I must be less upright and moral, because I have chosen the stage."

"I have no doubt that you think so now," replied the pastor; "but remember, that 'evil communications corrupt good manners,' and you cannot associate with the vile, as you will be compelled to, and not be injured: besides, my son, nothing ought to be pursued on which you cannot ask God's blessing; and you will not pretend to say that you can bend your knee,

and ask that blessing, before you go to your nightly business; you cannot dream that the glory of God is promoted thereby."

Frank listened seriously, but his mind was still averse to this mode of reasoning; inclination held the reins and guided his footsteps.

"Will you, my son, recall, for one moment, the circumstances of your mother's death-bed? Do you recollect how she charged me to look after her children, and counsel them when they were led astray?"

A tear glistened in his eye, as he listened to this appeal, but he replied, "I remember it all, dear sir; I never can forget my mother's teaching: that, I think, will be a talisman, even in this calling, to keep me free from moral taint."

"Then, do you not feel it a dreadful thing to be under a father's frown? You know not what a blow you have inflicted. Your father is a changed man: a whitened head, a faltering step, a dimmed eye, and a benumbed intellect, all testify what he has suffered; then, cut off, as you are, from your father's house, your sisters' hearts are bleeding at the estrangement. Can I not persuade you to return?"

"Not now, my friend. My prospects, so far, are bright. I wish to convince you all that an actor can be a good man and an honor to his profession."

Mr. Berkely, seeing that further remonstrance was in vain, sorrowfully took his leave, saying, "Should dark days come, my son, remember your mother's friend, your early pastor. Come to me, freely. I expect you, Frank, for daily you are borne upon my heart before a throne of grace."

The door closed upon the faithful shepherd, and Frank shut himself in his room, thinking deeply upon the pastor's words. The truth was, that he could not forget, wholly, the instructions of his early days. His mother's nursery-hymns and prayers, her Sabbath and her fireside teachings, her sweet example and her holy love, spread, all unconsciously, a shield before him, in many an hour of temptation.

Ralph Cameron had not forgotten him: he constantly visited the friend of his youth. College friendship and Christian prin-

ciples impelled him forward. He uttered no reproaches, listened calmly to all of Frank's romantic anticipations; always called for him, on Sabbath days, to take him to the house of God; for, strange to say, these early habits were never wholly relinquished, and it was a singular sight, to many who witnessed his stage performances, to see him weekly in the house of God, by the side of Ralph Cameron. Common spectators were not, perhaps, aware of the power of an early religious education; they did not know with what impressive calls the silvery chimes of Sabbath-bells banished, for a while, the bustle and excitement of a public life, and brought back the quiet skies, the green lanes, the music of the village bells, the sweet organ, the tender tones of a departed mother, and the solemn teachings of his early pastor. The city bells never called in vain; for the services of the sanctuary brought back his home at Ravenswood: and even that domestic association was unspeakably valuable to the misguided youth, for it kept him within reach of holy influences. He corresponded, constantly, with Edith, but had never received one line, not even a message, from his father, and he felt the bitterness of banishment from the paternal roof.

After he had been for some time following his profession, he was sitting in his room, one day, when a knock came to his chamber-door. On opening it, what was his surprise to see Aunt Priscilla. "Come in, aunt," said the young man, although he was not much pleased to see the old lady. Taking her seat, she spread her handkerchief on her lap, placed her spectacles quietly upon her nose, and commenced rocking herself, and tapping her foot quickly upon the floor. Frank regarded all this as preparations for a serious lecture, and, with his old expression of arch humor on his face, he awaited the delivery.

"I s'pose that I'm not a welcome visitor, Frank, but ye see I had to come, to speak my mind about your awful life. You're breakin' your father's heart, and killing yer sister Edith, by yer graceless conduct."

"Why, Aunt Priscilla, I am not following any vicious ways."

"Why, what do you call the play-house? I call it Satan's synagogue. I think it's awful to go there, and then to be one of the players, I wonder yer mother's sperit doesn't follow ye every night."

"Why, aunty, I don't have anything to do with the other members of the theatre, only in the way of business."

"Well, even to be on the same stage, and actin' with sich a set of drinkin', swearin', rantipole men, is awful, in the sight of all good men and woman; and mark my words, Frank, ye can't touch pitch without bein' blackened."

"I am sorry to make you all so unhappy, but I could not be a merchant, and, with my talents, I may be a great performer."

"Oh, if ye could jist see yer poor father! I hardly knowed him agin. He never smiles. He walks about his place with his eyes down on the ground. His back is bowed like an old man, and his step is onstiddy. We're all afraid that he'll have a stroke, if he keeps on in the same way."

Frank was deeply affected by this account, for his affectionate heart yearned for his father and his home; but he was by no means disposed to listen to the advice of those whom he termed mistaken friends. Aunt Priscilla wiped her eyes with her brown silk handkerchief, took an extra pinch of snuff, then seizing her blue cotton umbrella, bade Frank good-bye, sadly afraid that he was wholly given up to the evil one.

Edith longed to see her brother. Many were the dreary hours which she spent at Ravenswood, ever since his sunny smile and joyous laugh had been banished. But her unwavering trust in God sustained her, and letters from Gerald cheered her with the joyful news that she might now look forward to a speedy return. One evening, after the lamps were lighted, she was sitting alone in the library. She had been reading, and was leaning thoughtfully upon the table, ruminating deeply upon the past. Thoughts of her absent brother always visited her at this hour, and she often wondered when she should see his dear face again. Suddenly, she thought she heard a quick tap at the window. She raised her head and listened again;

the tap was repeated more loudly. She arose, and putting aside the heavy curtain, she was almost certain that she saw the face of a man gazing earnestly into the room. Alarmed, she was about retreating, but another tap came, and she heard distinctly, close to the window, "Hist! hist! Edith, sister Edith, it is I." Raising the window, she recognized her beloved brother. Pale and agitated, he seized her hand, and pressing it to his lips, said, "Dear sister, I must see you. Will you not come down to the rock! I have a great deal to say."

"Wait a moment, dear Frank," said the excited girl, "I will be with you presently." Hastily throwing on a hood and cloak, she joined her brother, and quickly reached the familiar seat on the shore. He pressed her closely to his heart, and said, "Dear sister, how glad I am to see you. Tell me all about home. How is father?"

"Oh, Frank! ever since that fatal night he has never been the same; the excitement of that scene was too much for him. We fear that he has had a slight paralysis, for he has never taken much interest in his usual pursuits since then. He will be, for days together, shut up in the library, neglects his farm, and seems always depressed. We never dare mention your name."

Frank listened sadly to this intelligence, and replied, "Sister, I have felt the sentence of banishment a bitter trial, but I think that it was unjust. I have had other trials. When father forbade my appearance in New York, I was determined to persevere, so I joined a company of strolling players. I thought that I was among gentlemen, but I found out my mistake. They cheated me out of my share of money; their profligacy disgusted me, and I returned to New York heart-sick. When I found that the interdict was removed, I had hoped that father would relent, but I have since discovered that indifference to my fate was the motive that prompted the action. I have been encouraged in my maiden efforts, but I will own, sister, that the future does not appear so bright; there are very slow stepping-stones over which I must travel. I appear next week in a new character,—that of Richard III. It is the most difficult which I have ever attempted."

"Brother," said Edith, as she laid her hand gently on his arm, "there is one thing which I wish you to remember, and it is this: at the very hour when you appear upon the stage, I shall be in my mother's room, praying for my dear brother's return to his God and his home. Will you think of it, dear Frank?"

For a moment he could not speak, but at last he replied, "It would be hard, Edith, to forget such a solemn and loving request. If it were not for you, my sister, I should be driven to despair. You know not what a talisman your love has been to me."

After an hour spent in affectionate conversation, Frank conducted Edith to the house. Arriving before the library-windows, he saw several figures in the room. Drawing nearer, he perceived Blanche seated with Adele before a table, playing at some game, and Madge, on the steps, taking down some volumes from a high shelf.

"How lovely Blanche is!" said Frank; "and there is dear, merry Adele, bright as ever; and odd, eccentric Madge, queer as ever. I couldn't find it in my heart to tease her now, Edith. Can't I speak a word to them before I go?"

Edith advanced, and knocking at the window, she saw that they were at first startled, but when she raised it slowly, and showed who was there, surprise took the place of fear. "Come here, Madge," whispered Edith, "here is our dear brother."

Clasping her hands in joyful surprise, she turned round, and exclaimed, "Frank is here!" All three ran hastily out, and, clasped in their brother's arms, a joyful welcome burst from each.

"Dear, dear Frank," said Adele, "how glad I am!" and she clung around her brother's neck, while Blanche seized his hand, imprinting warm kisses upon it, and Madge manifested her joy in a more quiet manner. Raising the sash of the glass door, Adele drew Frank hastily into the room,—"*I must see you, if it is only for a minute,*" said the excited girl; "but, dear brother, you are pale, your eyes are hollow;

you are not happy, Frank. Oh! brother, brother, come back!"

"I can stay but one minute, dear girls; I must not be seen here." A noise of approaching footsteps coming up the avenue warned him to depart. "Farewell, dear sisters! Don't forget me." A hasty embrace, and, in another minute, he was gone.

Edith's heart was cheered by even this short visit, for she thought that, though he wished to conceal it, he was beginning to weary of his new life; and, with stronger faith and brighter hopes, she left him in the hand of her Redeemer. On the following Friday he made his appearance in the character of Richard III. A number of his friends, even some essentially worldly, were conscious of what a great sacrifice the young man had made. They had heard of the distress at home, of the disappointment of the father, the grief of sisters. They knew much of his private worth; and, moreover, their fears led them to believe that the want of deep compass of voice would be a serious hindrance to advancement in his profession to the rank of a star; therefore they concluded to bring his connection with the stage to a close. They knew his proud, sensitive nature, and that he would never brook a repulse. In one of the most difficult parts of the character his voice failed entirely. At the moment, the thought of Edith's solemn appeal, the kneeling sister in his mother's room, the fervent prayers of that beloved parent, her dying words, came suddenly before him and unmanned him. On the failure of his voice, his recollection left him; words would not come. He stood confounded. Slight hisses, commenced by friends, assailed him. An attempt to encourage was useless; the hisses were redoubled, until, in agony of grief and shame, he rushed from the stage.

Stung to the soul, he shut himself up for days. He would see no one, until at last, Ralph gained admittance.

"My friend, I congratulate you," said Ralph. "I regard this final failure as the interference of a gracious Providence in your behalf. When the mortification has passed away, you will thank God for it yet."

"Do not talk so, Ralph," said the poor youth; "I can never show myself again in this community. I shall be pointed out as a degraded man."

"Do you know, Frank, that your friends hissed you off? they were so entirely convinced that you ought not to be so sacrificed."

"Will you see that such a statement is made in the public papers?" answered Frank.

"I will, gladly," replied Ralph. "I am thankful, and believe that Edith's prayers have thus been answered."

Longing for his sister's sympathy, he resolved to seek her counsel; but ere he started for Ravenswood, late in the afternoon he strolled alone to the Battery. Seated on one of the stools, the sight of the placid bay calmed his troubled spirit. While seated there, in sad abstraction from surrounding objects, he did not for some minutes observe the figures of two young ladies who were passing near him. They were in close conversation, and were walking backward and forward on the path near where he was seated. Raising his eyes for a moment, he encountered those of Eveleen Austin, who was walking with her sister.

His first impulse was to arise, and hasten towards her; but the second thought, that he was now a disgraced and fallen aspirant, held him back. He bowed sadly to the young girls. The disappointed look with which Eveleen returned his salutation almost overcame his resolution, for he had not seen the sweet girl for some months. Seeing her move away despairingly, he arose timidly, and, when they turned back again, he advanced, extended his hand, and said, "Can Miss Austin deign to notice such a fallen man?"

She raised her eyes, swimming in tears, as she replied, "I shall never look upon you as a fallen man, Mr. Clifford, so long as you are free from vice. Misfortunes may assail the most excellent. It is worth that I esteem."

"Thank you, dear Eveleen, for those balmy words; you know not how they soothe my spirit."

"You may always count upon my sympathy, so long as you

are virtuous, Frank. I must say that I was deeply indignant at the conduct of your friends last Friday night."

"There is an end of that dream, Eveleen. I know not yet what I shall do. I shall seek my sister, and ask her advice. I shall never try the stage again."

"Will you tell your parents that you have seen me, Eveleen?" answered Frank; "I will never stoop to see you clandestinely."

"I will comply with your request," answered Eveleen. Walking up to her own door with the young girls, he took his leave, cheered by the sweet words that fell from her lips.

Edith had heard of her brother's defeat, and, though sorry for his mortification, was filled with high hopes for the future. She was not much surprised on hearing the tap at the library-window, which had at first so much alarmed her. Obeying the summons hastily, she repaired to the lawn, where she was received in the arms of her beloved brother. "I am a poor, forlorn man, Edith," replied Frank. "I have none left but you, and Ralph, and Eveleen. I know not where to turn. All the future is dark and dismal. Do you know, sister, that your words haunted me on that night? My mother's prayers—her dying accents—rang in my ears; they unmanned me. I forgot everything. I almost believe, Edith, that your prayers prevailed that night."

"Thank God, dear Frank, for anything that released you from such a destiny. I do not despair of the future. After the first disappointment is over, you will see the wisdom of all."

"Will my father see me?" answered Frank.

"I will not ask him yet; he feels the mortification too keenly; but I think he will, after a while."

After taking leave of Edith, the young man was walking slowly down the shore, when he met Uncle Peter.

"Dear Massa Frank, is that your face, at last?" said the good old servant. "The good Heavenly Father hasn't forgotten you; he sends troubles, Massa Frank, to bring us to himself. I'spect to see you a preacher, some day, yet. If

you wants public speaking, go speak for your Master, but don't sarve de devil, by playin' in his synagogue. I was right glad when I heerd what had happened to you in the big city. Don't take it too much to heart, good will come on it yet."

"It was very hard to bear, Uncle Peter," answered Frank.

"I 'spose 'twas a great cross, but I thought I could e'en a'most hear dear missis rejoicin' up in heaven, at the good news."

Turning away, as he wiped a tear from his eye, he shook the old man's hand, and said, "You are a kind old friend, Uncle Peter; good-bye."

"God bless you, massa Frank: you'll be here agin, in your father's old hall. Massa has a soft heart under a rough shell."

Edith perceived a manifest change in her father, after Frank's disappointment. Aware of his peculiar temper, she forbore any remarks concerning her brother, but her hopes were sanguine. She wrote to Ralph, begging him to interest himself, by obtaining some employment. His answer assured her of his deep sympathy, and she felt certain that he would soon be provided for. With increasing faith in all God's promises, she saw the first faint beams of the sun of hope tinting the mountain-tops of difficulty in her brother's destiny, and she felt that she could patiently wait for the fuller blaze of the noonday, flooding his path with light from heaven.



CHAPTER XIX.

MISGUIDED MADGE.



ANGELS of peace fanned their gentle wings around Edith's pillow; dreams of happiness visited her sleeping hours; hope whispered its sweet messages to her heart, and she walked, for a while, on the borders of "Immanuel's land."

At peace with heaven, her prospects at home were cheering. Frank was released from his degradation, Madge seemed more gentle and impressible, and Gerald, dear Gerald, was expected daily. These sunbeams drew her nearer to heaven, and floods of gratitude shed their halo of light around her whole aspect. Her countenance, usually so placid, beamed with the blessedness of nearer communion with the skies, and all who looked upon her felt that, if the beauty of the soul, shining out of eyes and lips and illumining the whole face, constituted real loveliness, Edith was beautiful. She had resumed her harp, and devoted a portion of each day to practice. The deep and solemn music of the old composers suited the tone of her spirit; although, to please her father, she studied much of the music of the day. Her voice was delightful, and, when poured out in strains of touching melody, entranced the hearers.

One summer evening she had taken her seat by her harp in the drawing-room. Her form was tall and commanding, and

the attitude which she assumed displayed the grace and dignity of her figure. Sweeping her fingers over the instrument, the room was filled with sweetest melody. Under the inspiration of the moment, her fine dark eyes were turned upward; masses of shining hair, dark as a raven's wing, encircled her classic head. As strain after strain warbled from her sweet lips, she was not aware of the approach of a carriage driving up the avenue, nor of the footsteps which halted before the open window reaching down to the lawn. Stopping a moment to rest her fingers, she turned suddenly, facing the window. With one long gaze of bewildered joy, she recognized the smiling face. Claspings her hands, she exclaimed, "Dear Gerald, have you come at last!"

Crossing the room rapidly, he grasped the small hands, and said, "Thank God, dearest, safe at home at last. I have just arrived. I heard the music, I knew the dear voice, and could not deny myself the pleasure of listening unobserved.

How greatly you have improved, Edith. You certainly have grown, and your voice is perfection."

"Do not flatter me, Gerald; there is enough in the heart to tempt to vanity, do not let words from Christian lips feed the baneful passion."

He led Edith to a seat on the sofa, where some gentle tears relieved her full heart. An hour's intercourse of sweet thoughts and pure affection almost repaid for the pains of absence.

"Where is Josephine?"

"She is at home," answered Gerald; "but more eccentric than ever. Added to all her ridiculous notions about 'woman's wrongs and woman's rights' her head is filled with French philosophy. She became acquainted with many distinguished French women; she attended their soirées, listened to their lectures, and has figured largely herself on many public occasions. She is so full of the doctrines of the Socialists, that I should not be surprised if she attempts to form an institution after the model of what she has seen in France. She has

often declared that Christianity is a great failure, and that she has discovered the remedy for all social evils. She has considerable talent for sculpture, and has cultivated it while at Rome; she really has brought home some very fine specimens of her work."

While they were conversing, Gerald observed two young ladies coming up the avenue. At first, he did not recognize them, for two years had made a great change in their appearance. When he had last seen them, he remembered them as young and unformed girls. He heard Adele's merry voice chatting away as of yore.

"Blanche, do you ever think of the Percys? I really would like to see Clara and May very much. I think they are long in paying us the promised visit. I suppose that Lionel has forgotten the water-nymph."

"You don't make me believe that, Adele," replied Blanche. "I think I have seen a cunning little postscript at the foot of Clara's letters; but I tell you, Adele, I should be dreadfully afraid of his dignity."

"But who have we here?" said Adele. "There is a gentleman in the drawing-room, Blanche."

By this time they had reached the hall-door, and Gerald, coming out, was taken completely by surprise at the lovely figure which presented herself before him. Gerald was at all times a passionate admirer of beauty, and for a moment stood enraptured. She had grown considerably. Her figure was one of matchless symmetry. Every movement was graceful. Her little foot peeped out from under her long dress in all its fairy dimensions, and in one dimpled hand she carried her flat, decorated with wild flowers. Her deep blue eyes were shaded by long, dark, curling lashes; around her mouth played troops of bewitching dimples. Every feature was faultless. Her charming complexion was heightened by exercise, and a profusion of golden-brown hair hung over a snowy neck and shoulders in graceful ringlets. The expression of her face was inclined to the pensive rather than the gay, and there was about her whole manner that dependent

caressing gentleness which is so attractive in a young and lovely woman.

"And this is Blanche, I suppose?" said Gerald, as he respectfully took her hand. The young girl blushed at the evident admiration which she had excited. "Is this young lady mischievous Adele? I think I see some of the old merriment sparkling about her still."

"These are our little twins, Gerald," said Edith; "they make me feel quite old. A very short time since they were little girls; now you see we are compelled to treat them as young ladies."

"You have no idea, Gerald, how wonderfully we have improved," said Adele. "We have been taught to speak French, to dance, to play, to sing, to draw, thought I cannot pretend to much proficiency in the latter,—Blanche excels in that; then, good sister Edith would not allow us to neglect household accomplishments, so we can make pies, and cakes, and jellies; we know exactly how a house ought to be kept; we can sew and knit, and I am sure that I can talk and laugh; indeed, Gerald, you must respect us highly," dropping a mock courtesy, "for we are highly accomplished young ladies, and ready to make our debut next winter."

Gerald laughed, as he replied, "You are sportive, merry Adele yet, I can see that." He was much pleased with the change in Madge, who had lost much of her bashfulness; and, although no beauty, was a pleasing, graceful little creature, with the most remarkable eyes that ever sparkled in a youthful face.

After supper, Gerald whispered to Edith, "Shall we not seek our old trysting-place? How often have my thoughts wandered to the old elm tree." Edith, soon equipped for a walk, joined Gerald on the lawn, and they rambled with slow steps down the familiar avenue. When they reached the spot, seated by the side of the one she loved, Edith was, for the moment, perfectly happy.

"You remember your promise, dearest," said Gerald, "the night before I left America?"

"I do, Gerald, but it seems like something in the far-off distance that I dare scarcely think of."

"And why not, Edith? How long am I to wait for its fulfilment?"

"Can you ask me, Gerald? You know my promise to my dying mother, that, so long as my sisters need my presence, I will never leave them; and does not dear, blind Lilly, and little Emily need my care? Could I forsake them when they are so young? They cling to me as fondly as to a mother, and I shall be neglecting a most solemn duty to forsake them now."

Gerald's countenance fell, as he said, "And how long, Edith, would you think it your duty to make me wait?"

"I know not, Gerald," replied Edith, her eyes swimming in tears. "I scarcely think that I ought to hold you to such a long engagement. If you wish for a release it is yours, Gerald, but I dare not forsake my sisters."

"Not so, Edith, but I think that you have very romantic ideas of duty. Blanche and Adele are old enough to take charge of your father's family."

"But they did not promise, Gerald," said Edith, as she fixed her earnest eyes upon his face, "and I did."

After conversing for some time upon the subject, the lateness of the hour warned them to return; and a deep shadow fell upon Edith's heart as she left the old familiar seat. Gerald often remonstrated with her, but could not change her views of duty, or stifle the pleadings of a mother's love.

As soon as possible, Madge paid a visit to Josephine, and was much charmed with the description of what she had seen and heard while abroad. On entering her studio, the young girl's respect was much increased by the display which Josephine made of her sculpture. She had some very beautiful specimens of her talent, and enlarged eloquently upon the number of female artists that she had met abroad.

"I wish that you could have been with me in Paris, Madge," said Josephine. "I could have introduced you to some of the greatest women in the world. There was Madame La Porte, the great philosopher; and Madame Fontaine, a great chemist;

Madame Leisseur, a profound politician; Madame Lu Moulin, a great historian; Madame Chapron, a great physician; and Madame De Bellak, a celebrated surgeon. I was invited weekly to their saloons, where I met some of the most brilliant minds in Europe. I have listened to lectures from these ladies more profound than I have ever heard from men; and really, I do not see how I can endure the tame society that I shall meet with in America. Then, these ladies are all Socialists, and are full of grand ideas of reforming society. Christianity is a great failure, and I really think, Madge, that I will devote my talents to the same noble end."

Although Madge was duly impressed by the flash of Josephine's eloquence, from the power of early instruction some very old-fashioned questions would arise in her mind, and she wondered whether there were no excellent wives, mothers, or sisters to be found in those literary circles. If the women of a nation were all to be philosophers, historians, politicians, lawyers, or physicians, she could not but ask, what would become of the youth of the land? These were mental problems that would occasionally agitate the brain even of Madge Clifford. But like a young enthusiast, she was led away by Josephine's representations, and agreed to the plan of coming over daily to pursue a course of study, under her direction, that would fit her for enlarged usefulness in the theatre of the world. When Edith saw that Madge was so much engrossed by her new pursuits as to neglect her home duties, at first she kindly remonstrated, and laid before her the consequences to female character of such inattentions, and begged her not to abuse the talents, which God had given her, for unwomanly pursuits.

"Why, Edith, if I should take your advice, what should I be good for?" said Madge. "For nothing but to bake puddings, hem handkerchiefs, mend stockings, visit old women, and teach ragged, dirty children."

"Well, my sister, are not these feminine employments to be attended to? I do not wish you, dear Madge, to be a household drudge, but I do want you to be a true-hearted woman; intellectual, if you please, to the highest degree of cultivation,

but qualified to make a home happy, in being able to direct all the nameless workings of a well-ordered household."

"I do not think, sister, with my aspirations, that I could ever be contented in such a humble, retired sphere; that will do very well for tame, ordinary women, but for a highly gifted genius, it never could be intended that she should hide her talents in the shade."

"Where did you get such ideas from, Madge? Surely, not from our dear mother," answered Edith. "Compare her character with Josephine's. When did you ever see our parent going about her house until twelve o'clock in the day, with tangled hair, slipshod shoes, and an old shawl thrown over her shoulders? She always found time for all her duties: for her children, for the cultivation of her mind,—for she always had some useful course of daily reading,—for benevolence, for friendship, but never neglected the proprieties of life. Hers was a perfectly symmetrical character; and I never can bear to see you, Madge, pass by such a model, to follow a female so greatly perverted as Josephine Fortescue."

"We shall never agree, Edith," said Madge, "and you must allow me to judge for myself; I am old enough, and am determined to devote myself to literary and philanthropic pursuits."

"I do not object to either," said Edith, "but I would not have them under Josephine's direction. I think, that in a well-ordered mind, they could be pursued without neglecting any home duty. I had a friend who visited England, and had letters of introduction to the family of Mrs. Wilson, formerly Caroline Fry. She said that she had never visited a more charming home, or saw a specimen of more perfect housekeeping, than in the family of that interesting lady. I should not object to see you such a literary character; but remember, that Mrs. Wilson was a consistent, devoted Christian, and bent her gentle neck to 'the yoke of Christ.'"

Madge, with her usual self-will, persevered in her devotion to Josephine, and spent all her mornings at Oak Hall. When Miss Fortescue undertook the editing of a paper, entitled "Woman's Advocate," she enlisted the talents of Madge Clif-

ford as one of the chief contributors. Articles from her pen excited much attention; and, flattered by Miss Fortescue, she wandered still farther away from the paths of modest humility.

First she wrote on abolitionism, then on priestcraft, on man's oppression, on woman's wrongs, and woman's talents. Stepping still farther on, she advocated the doctrines of the Socialists; then Edith became still more alarmed. Aware of the wild extremes to which they had gone, she felt as if the very citadel of her sister's principles was in danger. She remonstrated with Madge, then she appealed to her father. Having a peculiar dislike for all that was masculine, Mr. Clifford positively forbade the continuance of such a course; but, led on by Josephine, and supposing herself persecuted, she became more and more determined.

While the Fortescues were in Europe, Madge had been much more regular in her attendance upon the house of God; since their return, her visits had gradually declined, until she was seen no more in her father's pew. Edith wrote to Ralph, and begged him to exert his influence; but Madge was entrenched behind a fortification of arrogance, self-conceit, unwomanly prejudice, and extreme ignorance on vital points. She resented his interference as an encroachment upon her rights, did not answer his first letter, and returned his second unopened; but not without some pangs, for she could never shake off the controlling power of the character of Ralph Cameron: she feared, and therefore she avoided it. She became sullen at home, neglected her duties, avoided Edith, and treated her father with marked disrespect.

One morning, missing the wilful girl at the breakfast-table, Mr. Clifford inquired, "Where is Madge?"

"She stayed at Josephine's all night," replied Edith.

Her father frowned, and asked, "How long is this intimacy to continue? I have expressed my disapprobation repeatedly, but it appears all in vain."

"I regret it, dear father; but I have remonstrated, and represented the consequence of yielding to Josephine's guidance, but she seems determined."

When she made her appearance at the dinner-table, she scarcely noticed her father, and was extremely sullen and disagreeable. In the afternoon, Edith observed her preparing to go out; she seemed still moody and silent.

"Where are you going, Madge?" asked Edith.

"What right have you to know, Edith? I do not choose to be questioned about my movements."

"I have the right which our mother gave me, Madge, and fear that you are doing something wrong."

"I am going to New York with Miss Fortescue; she will lecture to-night, and I wish to hear her. I may be gone for several days."

"Are you going without father's consent? I fear, Madge, that there is great trouble before you."

"I am not going to be treated like a child. If I cannot be independent here, I will make myself so soon."

Putting on her bonnet and shawl, with haughty step, she left the house. Mr. Clifford was greatly displeased, and resolved upon his course. When Madge returned—which she did not do for several days—he received her with coldness, and requested her presence in the library, after tea. When she entered, it was with a haughty, defiant manner. "Sit down, Madge, I have much to say," said Mr. Clifford. "Your conduct is exceedingly offensive to me, and I have sent to have a conversation with you. I have been greatly mortified at the ridicule which you are incurring, by your foolish essays in your 'Woman's Advocate.' What do you propose by this unwomanly conduct?"

"Why, father, I do not mean to pursue the tame course of a common, humdrum woman. I know that I have more talents than ordinary, and I do not mean to bury them in obscurity."

"Do you mean also to follow Josephine's public course?" asked her father, with suppressed anger.

"I am preparing for public efforts, and will devote my life to deeds of philanthropy, so that I may leave behind me a name among the distinguished of my sex," answered Madge.

"And do you really suppose that I will countenance your

folly, or allow a daughter, dwelling under my roof, to make such a fool of herself?"

Her color rose, and her bright eyes glanced with anger, as she replied, "We are not born to be the slaves of men,—either fathers, husbands, or brothers; and, if I cannot pursue the bent of my inclination under my father's roof, I can easily seek another."

With these defiant, wicked words, the misguided young girl proudly left the room. From that day, her gloom increased; she seemed wholly estranged from her family, and spent most of her time with Josephine. Her father was cold and haughty, Edith kind and forbearing as usual, Blanche indifferent, and Adele disposed to ridicule the follies of her sister, frequently styling her the "Professor." She was rapidly maturing her future plans, having fully determined, when the proper time arrived, to leave her father's house. Her preparations were slowly made, for fear of detection; and often, in the shades of evening, a little boy was seen waiting at the stile that divided the estates of Ravenswood and Oak Hall, and Madge, as she had opportunity, gradually conveyed her clothes away in band-boxes;—as a woods lay between, the journey could always be performed unobserved.

When passing her mother's room, sometimes her heart misgave her, for there was a sweet, tender voice that whispered yet, in solemn tones, from that consecrated spot; but she regarded this as a female weakness, which she must learn to overcome, if she would be a great woman. Having removed nearly all, the last evening had arrived. Standing, for the last time in her bed-room, she could not but be impressed with the importance of the step she was about to take. She remembered her mother's picture, but she scarcely had the courage to open the little desk which contained it; but summoning all her resolution, she unlocked the desk, and removed the picture. She imagined that the tender eyes followed her reproachfully; and her powerful imagination almost heard the words which those silent lips would speak.

Everything tended to increase her depression. Edith, ob-

serving her sister's sadness, had been unusually kind. She feared that Madge was not well, and following her to her room, asked if she could do anything for her. Madge was lying on the bed, with her face buried in the spread; her sister bent over her anxiously, and said, "Have you a headache, dear? Let me bathe your temples," and, taking some cologne, she gently smoothed back her hair, and bathed the forehead and temples of the suffering girl. Her conscience reproached her bitterly for the part that she was acting, and when Edith stooped over to kiss her, she could scarcely refrain from throwing her arms around her, confessing all, and giving up her dark rebellion; but she thought of Josephine's sneers, and the evil spirit prevailed.

"I am not sick, Edith, I am tired," said Madge; "if you will leave me alone, I shall soon feel better."

As her sister turned away, sadly, Madge cast one sorrowful glance towards the dear, faithful friend, whom she might never see again. All Edith's kindness passed in solemn review before her; all her own perverseness and ingratitude; and, for one moment, her resolution failed: but stifling the thought with a strong exercise of her firm will, she arose, to make her final preparations.

"The way of the transgressor is hard." Madge had not yet fully learned the solemn lesson. She looked out of the window: it was a dark, cheerless night; the wind whistled sadly around the house, and a fine, drizzling rain added to the gloom. Throwing on her hat and cloak, she left the chamber. She shuddered, as she passed her mother's room. It was very late and a faint light burned in the entry; the house was silent as the grave. Her excited imagination quickened every sense. As her trembling steps moved hastily along, she thought she heard her name,—*"Madge, Madge."* She started, and listened intently. As she approached the staircase, some dry branches struck against the window: it sounded drearily, in the deep stillness. Her heart beat violently. So intense were her emotions, that she thought she heard her name again, in lower, deeper tones, *"Madge! Madge!"* She knew that it was but an

imaginary voice, but it drove her hurriedly down the staircase, to a small side door, which opened on the lawn. She seized the key, which hung near the door, with a trembling hand unlocked it, and, in a minute, found herself in the dark woods. Her guide was waiting for her, at the stile, and, in a tumult of bewildered feeling, she flew, rather than ran, through the lonely forest.

The trees sighed, and the wind moaned around her dismally. The drizzling rain made her shiver with the cold, as she felt as if the woods were peopled with evil spirits, whispering and hissing in her ears. When she reached the Hall, the carriage was in waiting; her trunks were all strapped ready. Josephine was inside, looking for her anxiously. Hurriedly, she slipped in, and her first salutation was, "Now, Madge, for freedom and for fame! No more tame, sleepy life, among the old oaks, for us; the wide world is before us, and we shall make our mark."

There was still too much of the passionate nature of woman sleeping in that young heart, to be much comforted, in this hour of desertion, by these vain, boasting words. "Out on the wide wilderness of the world," thought Madge, and the thought oppressed her. She quickly took her seat by the side of Josephine, who, hearing her sigh deeply, as she took her last look of Ravenswood, said, "Madge, if you ever expect to be a great woman, you must learn to discipline your feelings. You have been badly treated by your father, and I do not see why you should waste a thought upon people who do not appreciate your fine abilities."

"I must own, Josephine, that my heart almost misgave me, as I passed my mother's room. I could not but remember her early teachings, and I almost fancied that I heard her once more calling, 'Madge, Madge!'"

"You must get over these childish fancies, Madge. Your mother was a good sort of a patient nurse, but she was priest-ridden, and that will never do for you."

"Do not speak so, Josephine," answered Madge. "Mother had some weak prejudices, but I cannot bear to hear her spoken of contemptuously."

"I am glad, Madge, that you have escaped from Ralph Cameron. I have often thought what a fool you were to allow him to dictate to you about your conduct. He is a sweet specimen of the 'lords of creation.' If ever he marries, his wife will be ruled with a high hand, mark my words."

Madge winced somewhat under these remarks, for feelings of the deepest respect were still maintained for the young man; and she could not but think with pain of Ralph's sorrow and displeasure at her last daring step. Intending to leave for a distant State, they pursued their journey rapidly, and, at the end of the two weeks, had reached their place of destination.

It was a new settlement, where numbers, holding the same sentiments, had preceded them. They were received in a flattering manner by the head of the institution, especially Madge, who was regarded as a great acquisition; coming, as she did, from the midst of refined ease and elegance. Miss Grimshawe, Josephine's friend, presided at the head. "We are glad to welcome you among us," said that lady; "you have acted nobly; few would have had the strength to leave such a home, surrounded by all the soft attractions of wealth, to come among us struggling disciples of a new faith; but we are determined to teach men that we are their equals. We shall send out a stirring trumpet from the shades of N——. We are all bound very closely together, and you will find the ties of a common humanity much stronger than the shackles of priestcraft. We all have our duties to perform: you may teach, for in our community we have a number of children, whom we wish trained in our liberal principles; you will have leisure for writing, and will make yourself famous, yet."

Madge soon found herself placed in a novel situation: surrounded by females from different parts of the Union, fitting themselves for distinguished posts, when the day for the emancipation of woman had fully come. Some were studying medicine, others law, political economy, &c. In order to prepare for public speaking, they gave weekly lectures, which were open to all from the neighboring towns.

The vanity of Madge Clifford was fully gratified, at the admiration excited by her splendid reading of Shakespeare. At first, when appearing before a promiscuous multitude of male and female, her woman's heart beat wildly, but she learned too soon to strangle these feelings, as unworthy weakness, and was rapidly losing the soft bloom of diffidence, always so charming in a young female, and substituting in its place unwomanly confidence, which she styled self-possession.

She had changed her name, for fear of detection, and Miss Crawford was rapidly becoming a great favorite. Applause followed all her efforts. Her articles for the press displayed remarkable talent, and her young head was filled with vain imaginations. But could she be happy in such a promiscuous family? for she was compelled to mingle, daily, with women of coarse and vulgar manners, who seemed to think the polish and refinement to which she had always been accustomed, as quite unworthy of great minds. Unused to the drudgery of teaching, and not impelled by any high motive, she found it a wearisome occupation. Her woman's heart asked for love, its natural aliment, and here she received none. Feeding only upon the ashes of an unsanctified ambition, the cravings of her moral nature were all unsatisfied.

The power of a religious character hung around her still. When the Sabbath came, with its holy associations, she missed the soothing peace of her home at Ravenswood. When the Bible was undervalued, in her presence, something within shrank from the daring impiety, and the blessed ægis of a mother's prayers and influence shielded her yet, although unseen.

Her youth, her rank and talents, all bespoke for her great admiration, and plaudits were heaped upon her whenever she appeared in public. This distinction did not precisely suit her disinterested friend, Miss Fortescue, for she always claimed pre-eminence wherever she moved, and could not, and would not, tamely take a second place. Madge had left home without money; Josephine had assumed all the expense of her journey, and regarding herself as her benefactress, she made large

demands upon her time, her talents, and her service. These exactions became daily more and more oppressive, and Madge began to think that the picture of independence, which she had so brightly colored in the future, on nearer approach, was overcast with dark and dismal shadows.

We will take an extract from her journal, after an absence of six weeks from her home :

"Escaped, at last, from thralldom, I am now free to pursue my own plans. In the future, I see a bright temple of fame, to which I am hastening. Let commonplace women seek their happiness in the tame retirement of home, in subjection to the tyrant, man; but give me freedom, to expand my intellect, to exercise my talents, and to win a name, that will go down to posterity. When I have reached the summit of my hopes, I will gather around me the choice spirits of the world, who will come to worship at the shrine of their young priestess."

"But it is hard to shake off the trammels of early education. I cannot go to bed without my evening prayer; I cannot rise in the morning without some thoughts connected with my early home. When the Sabbath comes, unconsciously I sigh for its sweet peace, although I am ashamed to let it be seen how powerful are these longings. What often appeared to me so tedious, when under the rules of my home, now returns to me, in sweet contrast to the utter disregard of all sacred obligations. Which can be right?

"*Wednesday evening.*—I gave my first reading of Othello, to-night. When appearing, for the first time, before a promiscuous audience, for a few minutes my heart beat wildly and my brain swam; but summoning resolution, I commenced, and as I became interested, I forgot the assembly, and the warm applause almost intoxicated me. I returned home, fully repaid for the effort. What would Edith say? What would Ralph think? Josephine did not appear much delighted with my success.

"*Friday.*—I wish that I could discharge my debt to Josephine; she seems to think that I can never repay the obligation which I owe to her. From early in the morning until late at

night she is calling upon me to perform countless services, that wear upon me so heavily, that I find I have but exchanged natural subjection to those whom I ought to love and reverence, for assumed servitude to one who has no claims upon me but such as I have made for myself. Am I in the path of duty? O, how dark all seems around me! I fear that I can never come up to Josephine's ideas of a strong-minded woman. My heart is craving for love, and there is none around me; the atmosphere is filled with icebergs, which freeze my very heart. The women are made of steel, sharp, hard, repelling. No Sabbath, no fireside, no Bible, no God. Can I be happy without these? Will fame,—for I enjoy it,—compensate for these privations? Can I live without the sunlight of affection?

"Sunday evening.—I stole away this evening to church. Josephine did not know it; but how different the services all appeared to me! At home, how listless, how inattentive, I used to be! How often I neglected these holy privileges? To-night, they came over my spirit with a sweet, subduing power; they brought back home, mother, sisters, friends. But I fear that I have greatly offended God. I fear that I have wandered too far from the paths of holiness ever to be reclaimed."

After an absence of six months, we find the following extract:

"Tuesday.—Disinterested benevolence! I have heard a great deal of it among these dreamers, but when they are planning any great work, all appear to vie with each other in having the pre-eminence: all are watching the papers, greedily devouring all that is said of their great performances. How different from my ideas of disinterested benevolence! 'Let every one please his neighbor for his good to edification.' 'Look not every man on his own things, but on the things of others.' 'For even Christ pleased not himself.' How different these holy, unselfish precepts of Christianity, from the chimeras of self-styled philanthropists!

"Thursday.—Last night, I passed a house where I heard a lady playing one of Edith's beautiful songs. I listened. My

heart was bursting. Shall I ever see my sister again? O, what a poor mistaken dreamer I have been! There is nothing here to satisfy me. How can I go home? I have no money. Josephine would ridicule me; she will not help me. What shall I do? I will seek the good pastor of the village church.

"Friday.—I have seen Mr. Harper. O, how kind he was! He reminded me of dear Mr. Berkely. I told him my whole story. He sympathized with me, and gave me much Christian council. He advised me to go home. How can I ever reach there? I have no means; perhaps he can tell me how to earn some. O Ralph! where are you now? I wait, I wait for you.

"Sunday evening.—Mr. Harper invites me to his house; promises to interest himself to obtain some pupils for me, by which I can obtain money enough to take me home. But how shall I tell Josephine? It must be done to-night. I can endure this life no longer.

"Monday evening.—I have performed the dreadful task. Josephine was not surprised; as she says that she has long seen that I am in no way fitted for her high vocation. She treated me with profound contempt, and told me that I need expect no help from her. I would not take it. She has been most unkind and selfish, with all her boasted philanthropy. I have seen it only in public speeches and boasting articles in the press; but for private, gentle, unobtrusive acts I have looked and watched in vain. How different from the teachings of our blessed Saviour! I have incurred the contempt of the whole institution! Well, be it so; I have escaped from their influence, and I am willing to bear it."

Madge soon found herself at home, under the hospitable roof of good Mr. Harper. With real Christian sympathy, he obtained employment for her in the families of two of his parishioners, and she commenced her labors with feelings of heartfelt gratitude; but in a short time, so great had been her anxiety and fatigue, that symptoms of a low, wasting fever appeared, and the poor girl sank under accumulated trials. The pastor's wife was kind as a loving mother; day and night she was unremitting in her care of the sad young stranger,

whom she feared would pass away, far from home. In her wanderings, Madge rambled about Edith, and Frank, and Ralph; the names of her family circle were continually on her lips, and so piteous were her moanings, that Mrs. Harper's most tender feelings were awakened in her behalf. They strongly suspected that all was not right, but in the present state of affairs could ascertain nothing.

We will leave her for awhile, and retrace our steps to her astounded household, on the next morning after her departure. When the time for worship arrived, Madge did not appear; but that was not unusual. Breakfast was served, but still no signs of the young girl. Edith sent to her room: she was not there; the bed had not been slept in; her wardrobe and bureau were emptied. On her dressing-table lay a few lines, addressed to her sister:

“DEAR EDITH,—I can endure my life of subjection no longer. I go to seek for independence and for fame. You need not inquire for me. I shall be far away, in a very short time. May you be happy! You will not miss me much, for I have always felt as if I were one alone, and not welcome in my father's house.

Your sister,

“MADGE.”

With a blanched cheek, Edith laid the note before her father. He read it carefully. “She will repent this step, Edith, mark my words. She was always a perverse and strong-willed child. Perhaps some rough contact with the world may do her good, and bring her to her senses.”

“What shall we do?” asked Edith.

“Our first step will be to inquire at Oak Hall,” replied her father; “Josephine has something to do with this.”

Edith immediately walked over to the Hall. On inquiring for Miss Fortescue, she was told that she had gone on a long journey, having set off late at night, and taken a great quantity of baggage with her.

“Had she any companion?” asked Edith.

"I am not sure," replied the servant; "but I think that there was a lady in the carriage with her, who did not wish to be seen."

"Did she leave any message?"

"She simply said, 'Tell my brother that I may be gone for many years,'" replied the man.

When Edith saw Gerald, he was equally surprised, for he had not the least idea of his sister's movements; but both concluded that Madge was her companion. Inquiries were instantly set on foot, but they had taken every precaution to prevent discovery, having changed their names, and stopping at obscure hotels, where they could not possibly be traced. Edith, in her distress, wrote to Ralph, and begged his co-operation in her endeavors to trace the poor misguided girl.

He came instantly to Ravenswood, and although at first distressed, he said, "Do not make yourself unhappy, Miss Clifford; I think that this last step will work its own cure. She is a young enthusiastic dreamer. None of her visions will be realized. She will suffer great disappointments when brought into close contact with these fanatics. Finding no rest for the sole of her foot on the dreary waters on which she has embarked, like Noah's weary dove, she will be driven back to her home, to wander no more." For months Ralph was busy in making all the inquiries which he could possibly institute, but without success. He began to be discouraged. He feared, he knew not what. Sickness, desertion, death, passed before him; but he committed her daily to God, and looked and waited for an answer of peace. In his business transactions he frequently met with persons from abroad. Dining one day with a gentleman from the far distant West, he was conversing freely about his home.

"By-the-way, Mr. Cameron, there is a singular institution lately started among us, which has seriously alarmed the sober-minded of our village. A company of strong-minded women have established an institution upon the principles of the Socialists, where they educate women for the learned professions, and children in their own ruinous principles. Within

the last few months there has been a very interesting young lady added to the establishment, who has excited great attention by her splendid readings of Shakespeare, and by articles contributed to the press. She is no beauty, but such eyes I never beheld; they are luminous with the fire of genius; but there is that about her which has convinced all who have seen or heard her, that she was never intended for a strong-minded woman. A graceful gentle step, a rich musical voice, whose tones, in the pathetic characters which she chooses, thrills the very depths of the soul. There is, moreover, a refinement in her whole air and appearance, that places her far above the coarse spirits by which she is surrounded."

Ralph listened with intense interest, and said, "What is her name?"

"Margaret Crawford," replied the stranger; "though we are sometimes inclined to think that is not her true name. But, poor girl, hers has been a very sad lot. She was disappointed, and badly treated among her associates. Her spirits sank, and she became so unhappy, as to seek a refuge in the house of our good pastor, Mr. Harper. Like a good Samaritan, he interested himself, and obtained some pupils for her; but when I left P——, under her heavy trials, she had sunk into a low, nervous fever, and was dangerously ill. Forsaken entirely by the philanthropists, the good pastor and his excellent wife were as kind to her as her own parents; but when I left, it was feared that she would never rally."

Ralph bowed his head upon his hands, and on asking a minute description of her person, he was nearly certain that the suffering young stranger was their long-lost Madge.



CHAPTER XX.

COMING OUT.



YES! dear father, that will be charming!" said Blanche, as she laid her soft cheek caressingly against her father's face. "We'll have our coming out ball on our eighteenth birthday; that will be next month; shall we not, dear father?"

"We'll see, my dear: but what will Sister Edith say?" answered her father.

"O, we know that she will not approve of it; but then she is a member of church, and we are not. Just let us have this; she won't oppose you, father, for sister is too respectful and obedient for that. Now, if you will only consent, I promise to read the papers for you, to copy your writing, and to play chess all the winter evenings with you.

"You know how to bewitch father, Blanche. I suppose it will have to be so; but you must let me have something to say about your dress for the occasion, as I have a surprise in store for you."

"You may have the whole choice, father, only give your consent for the ball."

"Well, then, you may send out your invitations; and tell me what you want;" and away flew Blanche to seek Adele. Throwing her arms around her sister, she exclaimed in an ecstasy, "Only think, Adele, we are to have a coming out

ball on our eighteenth birthday. We'll have the two parlors and conservatory thrown into one room; the library and dining-room will be fitted up for the supper; father's room for the gentlemen's dressing-room, and the blue room for the ladies. We are to have hired music, and waiters from New York. We'll have some colored lamps on the trees in the avenue and out in the garden. The boats will be nicely prepared for the evening, for the weather will be pleasant enough in September to wander about the grounds or to sail upon the river. Then we'll invite the neighboring gentry, the Lindsays, the Irvines, the Scotts, the Arlingtons, and all our New York friends. Won't we have a nice time, Dellie?"

Adele, though so full of life and animation, was much more thoughtful than Blanche, and she stood awhile wondering what dear mother would have said to the entertainment; then, being really affectionate, she did not feel quite comfortable in taking part in anything so much opposed to the wishes of Sister Edith, who was really the acknowledged mistress of the family.

"I think, Blanche, before we lay our plans, we had better ask Edith's advice," at length said Adele.

"Well, if we do, all our pleasure will be overthrown; she'll never consent," said Blanche, pouting.

"Let us go and ask her," said Adele. Hurrying off to Edith's room, they knocked at her door.

"Who is there?" said the voice within.

"'Tis Blanche and Adele," said the latter: "we have something very important to ask."

Edith opened the door, and bade them enter. Seeing their eager look, she smilingly said, "What mighty request have you to make? I see an imploring look on both your faces."

"Well, sister," said Blanche, as she threw her arm caressingly around Edith, "you see we are young ladies now; we shall be eighteen next month, and father thinks that we ought to take our place in society. He has consented that

we should give a ball on that night, and we have come to ask your consent. You won't refuse us, will you, sister dear?"

Edith looked gravely on her beautiful sister, and did not wonder that, with all her attractions, she should wish to mingle with the amusements of the gay world; but she replied, "You know my views, my dear sisters, about these frivolities. I have renounced them all, and I have no taste for them; but for you, I have no right to exercise authority, —I simply give advice. You will find these vain things but hollow mockery of real happiness. I fear these fascinations for you both, and would bid you look higher for your enjoyments than to the giddy scenes of a ball-room. But this is my father's house: he has a right to say what shall be done here. If he has given his consent, I have no more to say, only this,—and she encircled each sweet girl with either arm, —I hope, my dear girls, that you will not allow these silken fetters of pleasure to entangle the feet that ought to be walking heavenward."

These affectionate words, dropped so lovingly and wisely by the wayside, fell like gentle dew upon the young beings whom she so fondly loved, and left an impression far more powerful than all the sharp repooofs and bitter denunciations of a harsh, censorious spirit.

In her perplexity, Edith went to Miss Arnold. "What ought I to do, my friend?" said Edith. "Should I say that I will not consent to this ball?"

"I would not advise you to do so, my child," replied Miss Arnold, "for this is your father's house; he has entire control of it, and has a right to say what shall be done here. Exert your influence to lead your sisters to higher pursuits; but if this ball is to take place, be courteous to your sisters' guests; and though you do not join in the frivolous pleasures of the evening, you may watch over them, keep them from improprieties, and hope for better things.

Blanche reported matters as they really stood to her father, and the ball was agreed upon. On the evening of

the same day, the twins were seated on the piazza, discussing, in an animated manner, their intended pleasure. Suddenly Adele raised her eyes. "Look there, Blanche! I do declare, there comes the old gig! What shall we do with Aunt Priscilla? Of all people in the world, she is the least welcome."

"Sure enough, Adele," answered Blanche, "here comes the old lady, with Snip, and Uncle Toby, and Poll, as I live! What shall we do with her on the night of the ball?"

"I don't believe that she will show herself on that occasion, for you know that she thinks balls very wicked," replied Adele.

"Yes, I know that; but her curiosity is boundless, and, mark my words, she'll be there," answered Blanche.

By this time she had reached the piazza. "Well, girls, how do you do! It's been a long time since I seed you. How's our Edith?"

From respect to their father, they received her politely, and aided her to dismount. In a few days the old lady observed the preparations for the expected ball.

"Well, deary me, Edith, the dead are soon forgotten," said the old lady. "Who would have believed that Mary Clifford's daughters would have spent their time in such a vain, ungodly way?"

"I could not help it, dear aunt," replied Edith; "they know my feelings; but father thinks that they ought to be indulged."

The old lady bemoaned the folly, taking heavy pinches of snuff for a long time; and at last, bidding Edith good-night, dismissed her from her room. The twins were busily occupied in making their preparations for two weeks before the eventful evening. Edith was surprised to see the interest which Gerald appeared to take in all the arrangements. He was in the habit of coming up to Oak Hall always on Saturday, staying until Monday; now, in order to aid the young girls, on the week before the ball he came on Friday, and was busily occupied in making rich wreaths of laurel, which were to be mixed with flowers on the day of the ball, and hung in festoons around the

rooms. There was a great abundance of early fall flowers in the garden and conservatory, and the young girls drew largely upon their luxuriant profusion. Edith could have wished all this energy to have been better directed, for she knew that disappointment waits on all merely earthly pleasures; but while she felt no interest in these scenes of gayety, she considered it a duty to see that all was properly prepared for her sisters' guests, knowing that a sullen, gloomy face of disapproval, might disgust them with her views of duty. At length the day arrived. Gerald had been busy, for two days previous, in hanging the festoons, and lending his exquisite taste to the decorations. Edith admired the beauty of the rooms, but was rendered uncomfortable by the entire engrossing of Gerald's time, in his devotion to Blanche's orders and counter-orders, running to bring flowers, mounting high ladders, and almost risking his neck in his efforts to oblige the whimsical young lady.

The birthnight was a bright moonlight evening, in the middle of September. Blanche and Adele had been all day on the tiptoe of expectation, and when they presented themselves before their sister, attired for the ball, Edith thought that she had never looked on anything half so lovely as the beautiful creatures who glided into the room, ere descending to the parlor. Both were dressed in soft, silver muslin, which their father had imported especially for them. The material was very fine and thin, hung in graceful folds around the perfect form of Blanche Clifford. She wore pearl ornaments, and a wreath of fresh rose-buds adorned her hair. The gossamer robe was particularly adapted to her delicate beauty, and she glided about the room like something purely spiritual. Adele was dressed in the same manner, with the exception of her ornaments, which were rubies instead of pearls, and scarlet geranium instead of rose-buds, which peculiarly suited her rich olive complexion and bright black eyes.

When Gerald stood at the foot of the stairs to escort Blanche into the room, for a moment he seemed bewildered by the beautiful vision, and conducted her in silent admiration to the head

of the room, where she was to receive her guests. So much was he engrossed by the contemplation of her beauty, that he had nearly forgotten his duty to Edith, who was expecting him at the head of the staircase. Suddenly remembering how long he had kept her waiting, he excused himself; and a shade, very much resembling disappointment, passed over his face as he saw the pale, dignified figure, clad in a robe of plain India muslin, with a few natural white flowers in her raven tresses, and who greeted him with a cold and freezing manner, while she extended the tip of her gloved fingers, barely touching his arm. He could not but contrast her with the glowing, bewitching creature whom he had just left, and sighed—for what?

The scene was one of enchantment. The flowers, the dazzling lights, the youth and beauty there assembled, were all bewildering. No wonder that the young creature who burst upon the world for the first time, in all her youthful loveliness, should have been intoxicated. She could not but be aware of the expressions of admiration whispered all around her. The centre of all eyes, her hand was sought in every dance by eager aspirants for the honor; and Edith, observing that several young ladies were joining in the waltz, whispered to her sister, "Do not waltz with gentlemen; your father disapproves of it, and dear mother has often expressed her aversion."

"You need not fear," answered Adele, "I would not, under any consideration, so far forget my dignity." Just then a very fashionable-looking young gentleman advanced to Blanche, and before Edith could utter another word of warning, she was whirling around the room, encircled by the arm of an entire stranger.

Early in the evening, as the company were assembling, what was the astonishment of the sisters to see Aunt Priscilla entering the room, attired in the drab-colored wedding-dress which she had so often described, made in the fashion of forty years ago, narrow skirt, short-waisted, and standing alone. She wore also a very full white muslin apron, which was formerly considered an important appendage to full dress; the sleeves were

short, and on her thin arms were drawn long white silk mitts; her cap was of the usual kind, high-crowned, and decorated with a profusion of yellow ribbon; high-heeled slippers, and a very large old-fashioned fan completed her custom. We had almost forgotten a large bunch of flowers, which she always wore in the bosom of her dress on grand occasions. Her curiosity had overcome her scruples, and she walked about the rooms scanning the dresses, throwing up her eyes and hands in mute astonishment; but on coming near a very fashionably dressed lady, she exclaimed, "Goody gracious! Did I ever see sich hoops! They're squeezin' me on every side."

Passing near a lady whose neck was very much exposed, she said, loud enough to be heard, "Edith, do go speak to that young woman; she's forgotten to dress herself. I wonder how her mother could let her come in such a trim? I raly believe she's got no shoulder-straps on at all." Finding that her niece did not notice her remark, before Edith could interfere she ran after her, and throwing a large pocket handkerchief over her neck said, "Young woman, as there are so many men in the room, I guess you'd better kiver up your neck; you look scandalous." The offended belle threw the handkerchief angrily upon the floor, and made her way into a distant part of another room.

Passing by another, whose dress was very conspicuous, Aunt Priscilla stood close to her, and deliberately placing her spectacles over her nose, eyed the young lady from head to foot, and taking her dress in her hand, she said, "Well, sure, this must have cost a heap of money." Taking the arm of her companion, the astonished young lady moved off in high displeasure.

When the dancing commenced, Aunt Priscilla was horrified. With eyes thrown up, and uplifted hands, she sat rocking to and fro and taking large pinches of snuff, as was her custom when under deep exercise of mind.

"Why, Edith, dear, they're jist all the world like a set of mountebanks; I never seed sich behavior in my born days. When I was a young gal, and Jedediah came a courtin' me, he

always sot on one side of the fire-place, and me on t'other: he never comed any nigher; but jist look at those gals! Old woman as I am, I'm a'most ashamed to set in the same room. And there's Blanche! Who is that man with his arm around her waist, spinning her round for all the world jist like a top?"

"Why, aunty, this it all contrary to my desire. I am just looking for Blanche, and I shall use my influence to stop it." Coming again in sight of her sister, she encountered Gerald, regarding Blanche with an unusual expression of anger upon his countenance.

"Edith, can you bear that?" said Gerald, greatly excited. "It is too much to see that lovely creature waltzing with that young libertine."

"This is just what I wish to say to you, Gerald; can't you contrive to speak to Blanche?"

"I shall remain near her, and will use all my influence,—that is, if I have any."

Edith hurried away with a heavy weight upon her heart; and why?

Exhausted by her exertions, Blanche threw herself upon a lounge near Gerald, who, walking hastily towards her, took her arm and begged her to walk with him. Conveying her to a small side-room, greatly excited, he said, "Blanche, do not waltz; I can't bear it; or rather," changing his tone, "your sister requests it. It is not proper for such a young girl to waltz with a stranger."

"Well, then, I promise you not to waltz again; but why don't you dance, Gerald?" answered Blanche.

"Because I never learned," replied the young man.

"Well, can't I teach you?" said Blanche, with the most bewitching smile. "You have only to walk two or three times with the set, and you will know all about it. Won't you stand up with me in the next set? If you don't, I'll waltz, Gerald," said Blanche, archly, shaking her little fan. To prevent such a thing Gerald consented; and what was Edith's surprise to see him with the giddy dancers, and following the movements of Blanche as if entirely bewildered. Wherever Blanche moved,

Gerald was near, and seemed for awhile to have forgotten that there was such a person in the room as Edith, until the march struck up for supper, when he hastily sought for her, and presenting her his arm, conveyed her in silence to the supper-table.

Meanwhile, Aunt Priscilla had excited much laughter among the fashionable guests. Her singular costume, eccentric manners and odd expression mortified her nieces not a little; and Edith was pained when she heard the following conversation. Miss Lindsay, running up to Blanche, said: "Who is that old quiz going about the room shaking her bony finger at the company?"

"O, she is an old woman who comes to see us sometimes. She used to nurse my father when he was a little boy, and thinks herself, on that account, a privileged character; but I did not dream that she would push herself in among us to-night."

Her sister was grieved at this fresh manifestation of Blanche's weakness, in denying the relationship of her good, though odd, old relative.

When asked, by one of the guests, who she was, Edith replied, "This is a very eccentric old aunt of ours, whom we respect for her real worth, though she does sometimes annoy us by her oddities."

Tired of the scene, Aunt Priscilla went up to Edith and said, "My dear, you'll have to excuse me now; Snip is not very well. I must go give him some medicine. I should like to give you some more of my company, but I can't." And by ten o'clock the old lady disappeared, shaking her head and taking extra pinches of snuff, in disapproval of the whole scene.

After supper, pleading a bad headache, Edith retired to her room, to commune with her own heart ere she sought her couch. She reviewed all the events of the evening, and was greatly disturbed by the conduct of her betrothed. She endeavored to still the rising disquietude of her heart, but it was all in vain; she could not blind herself to what she had seen, and

prayed for guidance in the path of duty. She mourned over the worldiness of the scene, for her sisters had been completely intoxicated with admiration. They had mingled, she feared, with characters whom she would not wish for their intimates; and she saw before her path hills of difficulty. It had been a trying evening to Edith. Madge, wanderer from her father's roof, her fate unknown; Frank, still in a state of banishment: these scenes of gayety had no charms for her, and she realized the need of a stronger arm and more sympathizing heart than could be found in mere humanity. She found it all in her Redeemer. She retired to her rest, and while the sounds of music were prolonged late in the night, and the revellers were still unwilling to depart, Edith's last thoughts were hopeful and serene, and her dreams brought back the loved and lost.

After she left the room, Gerald yielded himself once more to the fascinations of Blanche. The evening was mild and balmy. A September moon illumined the landscape and danced upon the waters of the Hudson, inviting those fond of the amusement to an excursion on the river.

"Come, Blanche," said Gerald, "let us make up a party for the river,—it is a charming evening for a row; invite some of your young friends, and we'll leave the warm rooms for the cool Hudson."

Accordingly, Blanche, Adele, and several others, accompanied Gerald to the shore, and seating themselves gaily in the boat, were soon pushed off into the river. They spent an hour delightfully, rowing about, while the young ladies lent enchantment to the scene, by the melody of their sweet voices floating on the midnight air. Blanche was greatly excited, and Adele mischievously amused herself by rocking the boat to and fro, to the great terror of the city girls. Blanche was somewhat alarmed, for, being of a more timid nature than frolicsome Adele, she was afraid of an upset. Seated in the bow of the boat, Gerald seemed entirely engrossed in endeavoring to quiet her fears; wholly captivated by her fascinations, he appeared quite bewildered, and almost forgot the relations between himself and Edith, when Blanche suddenly cried out, "Oh! Bro-

ther Gerald, do stop Adele; she will upset us yet!" This appellation, which she often used in addressing the young man, sounded unpleasantly at this time, and he began to take his heart to task for the feeling. Withdrawing himself suddenly from her side, he took his seat in a distant part of the boat, and during the rest of the excursion was moody and silent.

Blanche, taking his arm when they landed, said, "Why, Brother Gerald, what is the matter? What makes you so cross? Have I offended you?"

"You have, not, Blanche; but let us hurry into the house; the dew is falling, and you may catch cold."

When the bewilderment of the evening was over, and Gerald found himself alone in his room, a review of the evening was by no means satisfactory. He saw that he had neglected Edith, and his conscience reproached him bitterly. "But who could help it," thought he, "in the presence of such a bewitching creature as Blanche Clifford?" Certainly, it might have been answered, "Not weak Gerald Fortescue." But, desiring to pursue an honorable course, the next day he avoided the young girl, was particularly kind and attentive to Edith, and on taking leave of her for New York with the same old tenderness of former years, her woman's heart was satisfied, and she banished her jealous fears as unworthy of her.

The reaction of the next day after the ball abundantly proved the unhealthy nature of such excitement; for neither Blanche nor Adele could settle themselves to any sober occupation, but after sleeping until a very late hour, they wandered about from room to room, listless and yawning, in search of some new excitement. Blanche Clifford had created a great sensation in her first appearance in the gay world. All were enraptured with her beauty, and charmed with Adele's sparkling wit and vivacity. Invitations poured in upon them. Mr. Clifford was gratified, and encouraged them to accept all from families whom he approved.

On the following week, an invitation from Mrs. Lindsay to a party of tableaux perfectly intoxicated the young girls, and for several days they were busily engaged in their preparations

for the evening. Everything was arranged in perfection, and great enjoyment was anticipated. When the party had assembled, the folding-doors were thrown open, and the first picture that presented itself was "Night and Morning." Night was represented by a tall, stately girl, with a pale face, and masses of rich, dark hair, arrayed in a black robe, spangled with silver star, and a crescent resting upon her forehead; she stood with eyes uplifted, and an expression of melancholy thought rested upon her countenance. Morning was personated by Blanche, attired in a thin, gossamer robe, floating around her like a cloud; over her shoulders was suspended a wreath of flowers, and her beautiful hair was gathered in a Grecian knot, from which hung a profusion of rich curls, fastened by a bunch of flowers, whose delicate blossoms hung gracefully over her neck and shoulders. She stood on one foot, leaning forward, as though about to take flight, while in her hands she carried a basket of flowers, which she was scattering over the earth.

A burst of admiration greeted this beautiful picture, and Gerald stood, in speechless delight, quite abstracted from the company, for some minutes after the curtain had fallen. Next came a gipsy encampment, in which Adele represented, very effectively, a gipsy girl, and Blanche, a young girl having her fortune told by the old gipsy. "Taking the Veil," was the subject of three pictures: Blanche, in the first, as the bride of heaven, was again the chief object of attraction; in the second, submitting to the cutting off of her beautiful hair; and in the third, laid in a coffin, she represented the cloistered nun, dead to the world. Her beauty was the theme of every tongue, and she seemed perfectly intoxicated by the flattery which she received. Gerald's love of the beautiful again led him into the sphere of her attractions, and Blanche was pleased to receive the attention of such a distinguished, interesting-looking person, not reflecting how her sister might be pained by her thoughtless conduct.

As the fall advanced, preparations were made for the young girls' promised visit to New York. Edith dreaded the tempta-

tions of the great city, but her father was determined, and she could only trust and pray. She was, however, made more unhappy than she chose to acknowledge by Gerald's manifest admiration of Blanche; not that she feared his truth and honor, for she was too noble for that,—but she was troubled by this exhibition of the power which beauty held over her betrothed husband.

She suffered in silence; for she was by nature too proud to acknowledge her weakness. Her manner towards Blanche became chilled, and to Gerald, sometimes even haughty. A cloud rested upon her spirit; communion with heaven was interrupted, and the wings of her soul were borne down heavily by these weights of earthly care and disappointment.

When Edith saw her sisters departing for New York, she could only commit them to the care of her mother's God, for she feared that they would be surrounded by an atmosphere of folly. She had observed with sorrow, that Gerald daily became more remiss in his religious duties, neglecting the communion of the saints, and conforming more and more to the gay world; therefore she could no longer look to him for Christian influence over her beloved sisters.

But in the midst of these trials, her heart was cheered by good news from Frank. Ralph had succeeded in obtaining a situation for him as clerk in a bank, and determining to break off from all his old associates, he made the village where Mr. Berkely lived his home; for there he could enjoy the society of the good pastor and be free from the temptations of a city life. The facility of communication was so constant that he could always be in the city in time for business. Edith constantly corresponded with her brother, and blessed God for the serious tone which pervaded his letters; but she could not yet urge his return home, for her father's mortification was still too keen to venture upon the subject. On Sunday she always saw Frank, for he was constant in his attendance upon the sanctuary. One Sunday, after service, Mr. Berkely, with a smiling aspect, summoned Edith to the vestry-room. When seated, he addressed her kindly, saying, "My dear child, I think that I

have good news to communicate; I have sanguine hopes of your dear brother, Edith. He is one of our most faithful worshippers and earnest inquirers after truth. The good seed sown so faithfully, and watched so prayerfully, is taking root, and, I doubt not, will bring forth fruit to perfection. I see the blade, I look for the ear, and then the full corn in the ear; let us never forget to pray, my child, and God will give us his blessing." The good sister listened with a glistening eye, and with a full heart blessed God for these mercy drops. Anxious to see Frank, she accepted the pastor's invitation to return with him to dinner, where she was rejoiced to be folded once more in the arms of her cherished brother.

After the second service, the brother and sister walked to the old churchyard where reposed the remains of their mother. It was towards evening when they reached the spot. Seated on a rustic settee, near the consecrated grave, Frank said solemnly, "I thought, dear sister, that this was a fitting place to communicate all that I have to say." Taking Edith's hand, which he held fondly in his own, he continued, "O! how many anxious hours have I caused you, dear Edith. When I look upon the past, I wonder at the forbearance of our Heavenly Father; how have I provoked him to leave me to myself! But your prayers, dear sister, have prevailed at last."

Edith listened with a glowing cheek and swimming eyes, as she laid her head upon her brother's shoulder, and said, "Dear Frank, our mother's prayers are answered at last."

"You know not, dear Edith, what a powerful influence your warnings and your prayers have had on me. When cast off so harshly by my father, my impetuous nature would have hurried me on to ruin; but your love, your faithful fulfilment of the sister's vow, followed me everywhere. I felt, while that was left to me, I was not wholly forsaken. I really believe the remembrance of your words, on the night when I was driven from the stage, came upon me with such power, that it drove all other recollections from my mind, and caused the failure which then produced such anguish. I rushed to my

room in an agony of grief and mortification. Locking my door, I gazed upon my mother's picture. Edith, it looked upon me so lovingly and tenderly, and I almost fancied that I saw it smile mournfully, for I knew how she would have felt in the hour of my misery, and I longed, Edith, for one hour's communion with the sweet spirit. At that moment, I felt the beauty of Cowper's exquisite lines :

“ Oh, that those lips had language ! Life has passed
With me but roughly, since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,
The same, that oft in childhood solaced me ;
Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,
“ Grieve not, my child ; chase all thy fears away ! ” “

“ In that hour of desertion, the scales of passion and error began to fall from my eyes. I saw what a precipice I had escaped ; and all that I desire now is, that I may become a real child of God. Here, by our mother's grave, will you pray that I may be led in the way everlasting ? ”

Laying her hand upon her brother's head, Edith raised her voice in earnest supplication to a throne of heavenly grace.

The cool breeze sighed mournfully among the old trees, that bent over the dead ; and when Edith raised her eyes to heaven, there was the evening star, her mother's star, shining down upon the solemn scene, reminding her of a spirit that, in the better land, rejoiced with the angels over a sinner that repenteth. Taking leave of Frank, with feelings too deep for utterance, her ride home was cheered by the thoughts of all that he had heard, and she thanked God for the grace which had enabled her to keep her solemn vow. Here were some of the fruits of her sacrifice ; more were yet in store.

But Frank was not so happy. He had concealed one wrong, misguided step, which had deeply involved the happiness of one he loved, and he almost feared to pain Edith by the disclosure ; but the longer he reflected, the more clearly he saw his duty, and at last wrote the following :

“ DEAREST EDITH : Since our interview, I have been

deeply troubled at the thought of one wrong act, which I concealed from you; but I find that my conscience cannot be appeased but by a full disclosure. You know, dear sister, how fondly I love Eveleen Austin, and how devoted she has been, through my darkest days of trial and degradation. She has clung to me through all. When Ralph obtained my present situation, I felt that I had a right to ask for her hand. I sought her father. He rejected my suite with scorn, and asked how I dare, a clerk in a bank, aspire to the hand of his daughter? I answered, proudly, that I was his equal now, for, by the labor of my own hands, I was ready and able to support Eveleen, not in affluence, but in comfort, and we wanted no more. But, sister, he scorned me, and said that he had other views for her. Stung to the quick, I said, 'Should Eveleen be persecuted, she has a protector in me; and I do not conceal the fact, that I will save her from all suffering.' Many weeks had not elapsed before I received a letter from Eveleen, breathing the deepest anguish, and saying that her father insisted on her accepting the hand of a man of wealth, worldly and unprincipled, whom she deeply abhorred. The more that she refused, the more bitter was his persecution. I was agonized. I wrote an answer, urging immediate marriage. Edith, I was wrong, but I could not bear to see her miserable. We were married privately, and I feel that I ought now to claim my bride,—I am able to support her. But how shall I inform her father? I have made up my mind to do so, ere I close this letter.

"Since I wrote the lines above, I have informed Mr. Austin of all. I had not despatched my letters but two hours, before a carriage drove up to the bank, and Eveleen, pale and terrified, but nearly motionless, in the back seat, beckoned me to come to her. Bursting into tears, she said, 'Frank, I am a disowned and banished daughter! I have none left but you. My father says that he has abandoned me to my fate.'

"I shall take a cottage near Mr. Berkely, and there we

shall pass our lives together until better days arrive. Do not blame me, Edith. I have done nothing clandestinely. I told Mr. Austin that I would save her from persecution; and I trust that I can make her happy. Will you look for a home for us? We are boarding in New York until our house is ready. There, in the retirement of the country, loving and comforting each other, I trust that we shall find peace.

Affectionately, your brother,
"FRANK."

Edith read the letter seriously, for she feared that sore trials were in the way of her brother and his gentle wife: but she busied herself in looking for a suitable home for the young pair. In caring for her dear brother she forgot many of her own personal griefs.

But a new trial awaited her. Lilly's peculiar affliction made it necessary that she should be sent away from home to be educated. This had been Mrs. Clifford's request; and now that she was old enough, Edith took great pains in making inquiries; and, selecting the institution at P——, she prepared to send her away under the care of a faithful and tried servant, Ellen Moor, the niece of old nurse. Lilly was greatly distressed at the thought of leaving her own sweet home and her dear sister; but on being told it was mamma's wish, she had no more to say. On the night before her departure, Edith, as usual, retired with the children to their room. Placing her arm affectionately around Lilly, who leaned her head upon her sister's shoulder, she said, "It grieves me, dear, to send you from me; but you cannot be properly educated at home, and I am sure that you will wish to be of some use in the world. There you can be taught to read and write, and to sew, to knit, and to do many more useful things. Ellen is a good, kind girl, and will take the best care of you. You will soon learn to write, and then you can send letters every week, and I will never neglect my little Lilly."

"Sister, I shall miss Emily so much, and though I cannot see dear Ravenswood, I can think how the trees look when I

hear the leaves rustle, and how the flowers look when I smell them. I shall miss good Uncle Peter, and dear old nurse, and my little cat, and my birds; there will be nothing so sweet there. But what shall I do without good Mr. Berkely? No one will lay his hands upon my head, and bless the little blind girl so kindly. Indeed, sister, a word from our dear pastor goes down into my heart, and does me good for days afterwards. When he talks to me about the dear Saviour, I wonder how anybody can help loving Jesus, and the dear pastor for Jesus' sake."

Edith folded her sweet sister in her arms, and bending her knee, committed her blind child to her Father in heaven, with renewed faith, as she looked upward and remembered his covenanted faithfulness to dear Frank. "May I not hope," whispered she to her heart, "that though perhaps long withheld, Madge, dear, wilful, wandering Madge, thoughtless Blanche, open, truthful Adele, sweet little Emily, and my beloved father, will all be brought home at last to one Saviour, one heaven, one home?" The hope cheered her spirit and nerved her for parting with dear Lilly. Taking her on to P——, in company with her father and servant, Edith saw her comfortably placed in a neat little chamber; and in her interview with the principal felt well assured that she was leaving her in the care of wise, judicious, and kind friends. Lilly was comforted with the thought that five or six hours' journey could, at any time, bring them together again; and being a pious, sensible child, she submitted, more willingly than Edith had anticipated, to the separation.

"Remember, Lilly," were her sister's parting words, "when evening comes I shall always be with Emily praying for my darling Lilly; you will not forget us then, love, will you?"

"Never. Ellen will tell me when the evening star shines in the sky, and then I shall think of you and dear mamma."

"At Christmas we shall send for you, Lilly; the time will fly rapidly. Good-bye, dearest," and with one more affectionate kiss, Edith was gone, and the blind child was alone with her nurse.



CHAPTER XXI.

WOODBINE COTTAGE.



DEEPER clouds gathered around the path of Frank Clifford. His father, who had almost resolved to recall his son, when he heard of his imprudent marriage was deeply displeased, and his increasing moodiness and frequent absence from his family led Edith to fear that the day of reconciliation was farther off.

A new object of interest, however, engrossed much of her time. Having succeeded in obtaining a neat little cottage on the banks of the Hudson, she was busily occupied in receiving the simple furniture which was sent up daily from New York. When the last touch was given, she looked around upon the results of her labor with peculiar satisfaction. The tasteful little cottage was an attractive feature in the landscape, standing, as it did, embowered in green trees, at the head of a grassy lawn, which sloped down to the river's brink, and around which bloomed every variety of beautiful flowers. Over the lattice-work that covered the front porch was trained a profusion of woodbine, which led Edith to name the sweet spot Woodbine Cottage. The furniture was very simple, but arranged to the best advantage by Edith's skilful hand. The windows of the little parlor, which reached the lawn, were shaded by thin muslin curtains; and Edith, out of the allowance regularly given her by Aunt Priscilla, was able

to add many little articles of taste, which Frank could not purchase. Some pretty vases for flowers, a neat little book-case furnished with valuable books, and two very pretty, comfortable, fancy chairs were added as the sister's gift. A handy housemaid was hired, and Edith saw that a nice meal was prepared in the neat little dining-room, ready to receive the young pair on the first evening of their arrival; for the kind sister had stipulated that neither should see the little home until all was completed. Towards evening, the boat which brought up the evening passengers, passed directly in front of the pleasant, picturesque spot.

Frank, who was pacing the deck with Eveleen, called her attention to the shore. "Look, dear," said the young wife, "what a darling little nest that is! How I should like just such a home! What beautiful trees! What a smooth, velvet lawn! How exquisite that little porch looks, with its woodbine arbor! And, Frank, look there! What a sweet-looking lady! What a noble air she has! She seems to be watching us very earnestly! Why, Frank, she is waving her handkerchief, I do believe!" and turning round to look at her husband's face, she saw there a very meaning smile. "O, Frank, I do believe that is our home, and that is our sister Edith! Is it not so?" said Eveleen.

"It is, my love, you have rightly guessed; and this is all the home I have to offer to the petted Eveleen Austin."

"Don't say so, Frank, it is perfectly charming," said the sweet girl.

Soon the boat was brought to the pier, not far from their home. Landing speedily, with their baggage, they proceeded, arm-in-arm, down the shore, to their cottage home. Edith, who had been anxiously expecting them, ran hastily down the lawn to meet the expected travellers. The little gate was quickly opened, and her arms outspread to receive the young bride, as she kissed her affectionately and said, "Welcome, my sister, to your humble home."

Eveleen raised her blue eyes to Edith's face, almost with reverence, as she replied, 'I know what you have been to

Frank, be the same to me ; we are a young pair very much alone in the world, with none to care for us but each other, and our sister Edith ;" and her sweet eyes filled with tears as she caressingly took Edith's arm, and walked to the house. Throwing off her hat, when she reached the porch, her luxuriant hair fell over her neck in rich profusion, and as she looked around her with an expression of innocent delight, Edith thought that she had never seen a being more lovely than her brother's gentle wife, and wondered not that he should love her ; but she sighed as she observed the extreme delicacy of her complexion, and the blue veins which coursed so distinctly under the transparent skin.

Edith conducted her to her pretty chamber, and as she clapped her little hands, enraptured with all that she saw, her sister was richly repaid, when Eveleen threw her arms again around her neck, and said, "Thank you, thank you, dear, sweet sister ! what a neat little dressing-bureau ! and such a jewel of a wash-stand ! and what a pretty carpet !" Then, flying to the window, she gazed out upon the charming prospect. "Just think, Edith, of looking, all the time, at such a beautiful view ! I would not go back to New York for all the grand palaces in the Fifth Avenue." Then, turning to the dressing-bureau, she quickly made her simple toilet, exchanging her travelling dress for a neat white robe, and twisting her beautiful curls around her little fingers, and placing a few flowers in her luxuriant hair, said smilingly, "Frank likes to see flowers in my hair, and I try to do everything to please him ; he is all the world to me, Edith ;" and down she tripped, like a little humming-bird, and, running out to the dining-room, she glided around the table, with movements light and graceful as a fairy. "Now, Frank, is not this tea-set charming ? white and gilt ; then that pretty little urn, and a cream-jug, and sugar-bowl. Frank, I know you did not order silver, and, you know, we runaways had no profusion of silver wedding-presents ; where in the world did they come from ? Now I know," looking at Edith's blushing face ; "you bought them, darling.

O, how kind you are!" and away she flew again, to heap caresses upon Frank's dear sister. "Now, Edith, is it not a dreadful pity that Eveleen Austin should be such a little fool? There, if I had married the great Mr. Peyton, I should have thousands of dollars worth of silver spread upon my centre-table, to show my envious guests. I should have a splendid house on the Fifth Avenue, a magnificent carriage and pair, real Cashmere shawls, splendid jewelry, point lace, and real diamonds. But, Edith," lowering her gentle voice to a sad whisper, "I should have had no love. My heart would have withered, and it would soon have been said of Eveleen Austin, 'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.' But now I have a simple cottage, far away from noise, and heat, and fashion," and, looking affectionately at her husband, "and I have a wealth of love and worth in the noble heart that loves me;" and, rising, she confidently placed her arm in her husband's, who led her to the table, and placing her at its head, said, "Now, fairy, let me see how you will do the honors of the table."

"I don't know much, Frank, but I can learn everything, for your sake." And, seating herself gaily at the table, she praised the ripe strawberries and rich cream, the nice bread and butter, the fragrant tea, and wondered if she should be able to have so nice a meal when Edith was gone. After tea, taking her husband's arm, she proceeded to the kitchen, and asked Edith the use of everything; then, out to the poultry yard, where, seating herself on a low stool, with all the playfulness of a child, she tried to catch the little chickens, and said, laughingly, "Edith, won't it be fine fun to see Eveleen Austin, with her neat white apron, and basket in hand, feeding her poultry? Would not the belles be shocked?" Edith was charmed with the simplicity and warm-heartedness of her interesting sister, and could not but admire the devotion which had transformed this child of fashion into the loving, domestic wife. Propheying much happiness for her brother, she turned with them to go into the house. Edith whispered a word to Frank, who

said, "Evy, dear, we are now the heads of a family, and I wish to have God's blessing on our house; it is my desire to recognize God as the ruler here, and therefore, if you have no objection, we will have family worship, morning and evening. It was my mother's custom, and I cannot think a family properly ordered without it."

Evy smiled, and said, "Do just as you please, dear Frank, though I think it seems a little Puritanical. I have never been accustomed to anything but the worship of God in his own house, but you are the master here, and all your rules shall be respected."

So Frank Clifford opened the Bible, read a portion, and, from a well-arranged form, conducted family worship in his own house. It required some self-denial to do so, but, beginning to consider duty before inclination, he manfully pursued the path of obedience.

Next day, Eveleen, knowing that Frank was fond of an omelette, ordered one for breakfast; but her servant not being able to make one, and being anxious to make some trial of her skill, she stepped out of her room, and in her neat morning-wrapper and white apron, undertook the weighty task. Having a book to consult, she was full of the idea of trying without consulting Edith, intending to surprise both her husband and sister. She toiled over her work, burnt her poor little hands, scorched her face, and when she had accomplished her task, rang her bell, and took her seat with an air of pretty triumph at the table. But she was afraid all was not right, for it looked too solid and heavy. When she offered a piece to her husband, she waited anxiously to hear his remarks.

"Why, fairy, what is this?" said Frank. "It is very tough; there is too much flour in it."

Evy's eyes filled with tears, and she said, "I'm so sorry, Frank; I thought I was making such a nice omelette, and now it's all a failure; but it is the first I ever made, the next will be better."

"Don't cry, fairy," said her husband; "if I had known

that you made it I should not have said one word. You deserve a great deal of credit for your effort, and if you will only stoop to ask a little advice, you will soon learn." Edith informed her what had been her mistake, and promised to show her all about it, and to furnish her with many valuable recipes.

When she saw them completely settled in their little home, Edith returned to Ravenswood, happy in seeing her brother united to a being so lovely and devoted, and hoped that the day would come when both should be restored to their parents' love. Eveleen was a happy wife, though the thoughts of home and mother sometimes cast a shadow over her sunny brow; yet was her devotion to her husband the more absorbing in consequence of this estrangement. Daily, she busied herself about her household arrangements. She was rapidly improving, under Edith's tuition, and bid fair to become an excellent housekeeper. Blanche and Adele had returned from the city, having spent a very gay winter, and now frequently visited their interesting sister, and counted it quite a treat to be invited to tea at Woodbine Cottage.

Eveleen's sponge-cake, Eveleen's tea, and Eveleen's preserves, were the nicest ever spread upon a table, and Frank was a proud husband when he heard the praises of his darling wife. The twins were still supremely devoted to pleasure. Blanche attracted many admirers, and Adele was the life of every circle where she moved. But had they quite forgotten God? It is feared that self and the world had entire possession of their young hearts; for, although for fashion's sake, and from the force of early habits, they still frequented the house of God, their interests were wholly engrossed in the amusements and frivolous pursuits of a false and fleeting world. Gerald did not seem to like the numerous admirers that flitted around Blanche, and Edith was disturbed by these fresh exhibitions; but, whenever he had been guilty of any act for which his conscience condemned him, his renewed devotion to Edith silenced her fears, and completely deceived her.

Frank's interest in serious things appeared to increase. Eveleen observed that he was more deeply engaged in reading the Bible, and spent much time in the retirement of his room. She generally contrived to have all her housekeeping regulated, and herself dressed, against she expected her husband. Seated on her little porch, generally in a simple white dress, she was ready to watch for the approach of the evening boat, and as soon as she saw a white handkerchief waving from the deck, kissing her hand, away she flew, and throwing on her large flat and silk mantle, her graceful figure might daily be seen, with rapid step, hastening up the shore, to meet her husband. Leaning on his arm, with her sweet face upturned to his loving gaze, she would lead him into the house, run up stairs with him, hand his loose wrapper and slippers, brush his hair lovingly, and then would say, sweetly, "Now, dear, do you want to be alone?"

"Yes, a little while, fairy; I will be with you soon."

Pleasant were the hours spent together, after these seasons of refreshment in the presence of his Heavenly Father.

Mr. Berkely often visited them at their cottage, and was deeply interested in the young pair. He was frequently alone with Frank, for an hour at a time, and there was evidently something on his mind which depressed and troubled him. He was devoted to his class in the Sunday-school, and employed much of his time, on Saturday afternoons, in visiting them at their homes.

Mr. Clifford began to ask questions about Frank, and Edith was delighted to speak of his improved character, of his lovely wife, his pleasant home, and his present appearance of deep interest in the things of God. She hoped that the day was not far distant when her dear brother would be recalled to her father's bosom; but she wisely forbore urging it. A notice had been given for confirmation. Frank heard it with solemn feelings. He had long desired to dedicate himself openly to God, for he trusted that he had given himself to his service, and longed to identify himself with the Redeemer's flock. Walking home quietly from church, Frank turned at length

to Eveleen, and said, "Evy, dear, I wish to tell you that it is my intention to be confirmed. I believe that I possess the spiritual qualifications for the rite, and I regard it as a solemn duty to devote myself to God's service."

"I suppose that it is all right, Frank," said Eveleen; "but, dear, I hope you are not going to be a Methodist."

"What do you mean, Evy?"

"I mean, that I hope you are not going to think it a sin to smile, and sing psalms all day; I think, Frank, it would be so gloomy."

Frank smiled at the foolish notions of his little wife, but making allowances for her education, he said, "I think, Eveleen, if any one should be cheerful, it should be the Christian: not full of levity and thoughtless mirth, but serene, joyous, peaceful. I have learned, Evy, that it is a solemn thing to live.

"Life is real, life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal.
"Dust thou art, to dust returnest,"
Was not spoken of the soul."

"Well, dear Frank," replied Eveleen, "I think that you are good enough now, but you must do your duty; I shall never interfere."

"I wish, dear Evy, that you felt more interest in serious things, personally," replied her husband.

"Remember, dear husband, that I was never brought up religiously, as you have been, and that makes a great difference."

"Yes, dear, I know it does; it is an unspeakable privilege to have had a holy mother, and I have realized its blessing; but, dear Evy, there is a great need in every human heart, and that is, the need of pardon, through a Saviour's blood."

"Why, Frank, what have I done? I do not break any of the commandments. I try to be kind, and gentle, and loving; I pray every morning and evening; I go to church: what else must I do?"

"We must remember, dearest, that God's estimate of our

character is very different from our own. He tries us by the spirituality of his holy law, which does not excuse a single omission. You will allow, dear Evy, that by that holy standard, all are guilty before God."

"I have always looked upon our Heavenly Father as a God of mercy, Frank, who will not be extreme to mark our shortcomings."

"So he is, Evy; but his mercy is extended to us through Jesus Christ alone, and we receive it by an act of trusting faith in his holy promises."

Many such conversations passed between the young pair, nor were they all in vain. The good pastor was a faithful guide to the young man, lending him suitable books, visiting, counselling, and praying with him. Light gradually dawned upon his path. He was enabled to embrace the promises, to realize his interest in the death of his Redeemer, and finally gave his name as a candidate for confirmation. Ere partaking of that solemn rite, he wrote to Eveleen's father, and his own, begging forgiveness for their act of disobedience; but, as yet, no forgiveness came. Mrs. Austin longed to fold her child to her heart, but the father was inexorable; his pride had been too deeply wounded.

When the day of confirmation arrived, no more earnest heart, or interesting person, knelt at the altar, than Frank Clifford; and many a heartfelt prayer went up before the mercy-seat, that he might be kept in the way everlasting. It may well be imagined with what feelings of unspeakable joy Edith looked upon her beloved brother, once so far astray, now brought back to the fold of God. Here was the visible answer to her supplications, here the fruits of that early Christian training, which had followed his young footsteps all the days of his life. When the Bishop laid his hands upon his head, and uttered the affecting prayer of the beautiful service, Edith's faith was strengthened, and she hoped that all her dear ones would at last be brought safely home into the everlasting kingdom. Eveleen looked on with a tearful countenance, for the solemnity of the scene impressed her heart, and

when she took her husband's arm on her return home, she realized painfully that there was one subject in which they had no mutual interest. Perhaps they were treading different paths. What if his should be to heaven, and hers away from God? The thought sank deep into her heart, and imparted a shade to her sweet countenance. Ere Frank partook of the communion, he wrote once more to his father a full, frank, humble confession of all his faults, and an earnest prayer to be taken once more to his bosom. Ever since the confirmation, Edith had observed a great change in her father; he had been touched more than he acknowledged, by the open profession of his son; and now she observed that her brother's picture was restored to its place in the drawing-room, and that her father seemed pensive and deeply ruminating.

After tea, seated on the piazza, her father took his seat by her side. "Edith," said he, "will you tell me something about Frank's wife?" Her heart gave a bound of joy, for only once before had his name passed her father's lips.

"She is all, dear father, that you could wish: one of the loveliest and most devoted of little wives. Though educated in the midst of affluence, she is the most cheerful and notable little housekeeper that you can imagine. I am sure if you knew her that you would love her; and then, during all Frank's trials she has comforted him, and upheld him so sweetly, never once complaining; but, like a bright sunbeam, bidding him to be hopeful, submitting to privations, and performing services that her delicate hands had never touched before."

"Edith, I can hold out no longer. I received such an humble, frank letter, from your brother, that I long to assure him of my forgiveness, and to take them both to my heart. You know, dear, that on Thursday next will be the anniversary of my wedding-day, which, during your dear mother's lifetime, we always observed. Would not that be a suitable time to have our family reunion? Since her death, I have still observed it, but it has been in the silence of my chamber, reviewing all the past."

Edith threw her arms around her father's neck, with her heart too full for utterance for some minutes. At last she said, "Dear father, how happy would this have made my dear mother; and darling Frank only needs this to restore his peace. He deserves our confidence; he is greatly changed: so attentive to business, so loving and devoted at home, so conscientious and faithful, as a Christian; you would scarcely know your wild, impulsive boy."

The father's eyes glistened, as he listened to the praises of his son, and he replied, solemnly, "Edith, you are nobly redeeming your vow to your dying mother. If you had forsaken him, as I have done, where might he have been now? But faithfully you have clung to him. I have watched your devotion, dearest. I see the lofty principle. You have won your brother back to paths of peace. Madge will come too; I feel it; and, Edith, your father, too. What would you say if I should tell you that you may hope to see him walking in paths of holiness. The atmosphere of Ravenswood, so purified by the sainted spirit that dwelt here so long, is full of holy associations and links which bind to heaven." Edith listened with all the feelings of her deep nature stirred to their very depths.

"Oh, father, how shall I thank God for all his goodness! How unworthy am I of the least of his mercies!"

"The longer I live, Edith, the more powerful becomes your mother's influence. If I go into my room, there are her table and books of devotion. Her sweet picture smiles on me, Edith, and seems to reproach me, when I neglect my Bible or daily prayer. If I go into the library, there is the chair on which she used to sit in our family unions; in the sitting-room, there is the Bible in which she used to read, in family worship; in the garden, the flowers which she used to love; in the house of God, the Prayer-book which she valued; by the wayside, the poor whom she loved to bless; in the parish school, the little children whom she ministered to so kindly. Often, as I pass along, I hear the little curly-headed prattlers blessing the memory of my sainted Mary."

Edith felt, as she listened to her father, the power of woman's influence as she had never done before, and hastened to summon her brother and his wife to his childhood's home.

Anxious to make the occasion one of great rejoicing, Mr. Clifford wrote to Mr. Austin, begging forgiveness for his offending daughter, stating all that he knew about their course, announcing his intention of restoring to his son all his rights, and inviting Eveleen's parents to meet them all at Ravenswood. Mr. Austin was too proud to yield, although his heart longed for a sight of his own Eveleen; but he left his wife free to do as she pleased, and the mother's heart flew to meet her long-lost child. Eveleen had frequently written to her mother, begging forgiveness; and it was a singular fact, that on the very day when Mr. Clifford's letter arrived, another touching epistle came from Eveleen, which Mrs. Austin instantly answered, assuring her of full and free forgiveness, but saying nothing about the contents of Mr. Clifford's letter. It was arranged that Mrs. Austin should meet her daughter at Ravenswood, on the anniversary day; but neither knew of the delightful surprise in store for them.

Frank regarded the recall as another token of God's unmerited goodness. It reached him the day before the reunion, and ran thus:

"Come, dear Frank, dear Eveleen, your father longs to welcome you to your home once more. Mr. Berkely has had a great deal to do with this result; what a dear, faithful friend he is! We shall expect you at four o'clock.

"From your own EDITH."

Eveleen flew to her husband, in an ecstasy of delight, saying, "Oh, Frank, won't it be a happy day! Home again to Ravenswood! Banished no more! And then, on your mother's wedding-day!" Then, bursting into tears, she sobbed out, "Oh! if I could only hope to be restored to my parents' love once more! But, I must wait patiently." Wiping her eyes, she resolved that nothing should dim the happiness of Frank's return. Soon recovering her spirits, for his sake, she chatted

away, with all the sweet simplicity of a guileless, affectionate child. Next morning she was up with the lark. Frank promised to come home sooner than usual, and she busied herself all day, wondering how Mr. Clifford looked, and what she should say, and how she should behave to her new father. At an early hour, dressed in a white muslin, Frank's favorite, with some natural flowers in her beautiful hair, radiant with delight, though trembling and blushing with vague apprehensions of she knew not what, she presented herself before her husband, and entering a carriage, they were driven rapidly to Ravenswood. As they came in sight of the noble mansion, Frank's emotions were visible, and Eveleen's expressions of rapture were voluble as usual; but as they drew near, the depth of their feelings silenced both; and when they approached the door, they perceived a group standing on the piazza ready to welcome them.

Descending from their carriage, Frank tenderly supported the trembling form of his sweet wife; and leading her to his father, Mr. Clifford first embraced his son in unutterable joy, "My son! my long-lost son!"

"My dear, dear father!" burst simultaneously from their lips; then, laying his hand solemnly on Eveleen's head, he said, slowly, "God bless my daughter—my Eveleen!" and she, in tearful silence, kissed the hand reverently, and replied, "Love me, for Frank's sake,—will you not, dear father?"

Edith received her brother with all the deep emotion of which her fervent nature was capable. Frank was nearly unmanned by the warm affection with which his younger sisters embraced him and welcomed him home once more. His feelings were deeply touched, on seeing good old nurse standing in the hall, wiping away the tears with her white apron; and old Uncle Peter, throwing up the whites of his eyes, in great delight, to heaven, as he wrung his young master's hand, and said, "Welcome home, Massa Frank! Didn't I tell you that there was a soft place in old massa's heart, and that we should see you back in your father's hall?" During this speech, Aunt Priscilla was hurrying forward, and seizing Frank's hand, said,

"Wouldn't Mary Clifford be a happy woman to-day, if she were here? But she's better off. They say the angels rejoice over repenting sinners, and I'm sure she's an angel in the skies, and shouts for joy to-day."

On entering the drawing-room, what was Eveleen's surprise and joy to find herself folded in the embrace of her beloved mother. "O mother, this is too much joy!" said the excited girl, almost fainting from the excess of her emotion; and taking Frank by the arm, she led him to Mrs. Austin, saying, "Forgive us, dear mother, and love my dear husband; will you not, mother?"

"You are both fully forgiven, my dear children," said the mother; and embracing Frank, added, "Henceforth, you are my son, my dear son."

Gathered around the family board, it was a happy group that assembled that evening in the halls of Ravenswood, and good Mr. Berkely, who had sympathized with all their joy, blessed the household, in the words of earnest prayer and benediction, and learned another lesson, of the power of woman's influence and the efficacy of believing prayer.

"All we need now," said Frank, "to make us happy, is the presence of our dear Madge. Have you heard anything of her, Edith?"

"Not a word," replied his sister, "but Ralph is in search of her, and I hope much from his perseverance. She has given us a great deal of anxiety, but I believe she will be restored to us yet."

After supper, the party were charmed by Eveleen's performance on the piano, and by Edith's harp.

Eveleen, whose sense was very quick in all that relates to the affections, was surprised at the admiration which Gerald manifested for Blanche, especially as she knew the relations between himself and the noble Edith Clifford.

While seated in the drawing-room, the father by the side of Frank, and Eveleen folded in her mother's embrace, Uncle Peter presented a smiling face at the door, as he said, "Miss Edith, here is a letter for you. I hope there is good news in

it." Edith, seeing it was Ralph's writing, seized it with a trembling hand, and, on breaking the seal, exclaimed :

"News from Madge, dear father; Ralph has found her!" Then suddenly changing countenance, she continued, "She is very ill, with but little hope of final recovery. As soon as she is able to be moved at all, Ralph will bring her home. She is almost heart-broken."

These tidings saddened the spirits of the party, but hope still whispered its sweet messages to Edith's heart. Before returning to Woodbine Cottage, Frank sought an interview with his father, in the library, and communicated to him first his secret wishes and convictions of duty

"You know, dear father, that I have always desired a profession. My first choice was most unfortunate, but since I have become a Christian, it is my solemn conviction that I am called to preach the everlasting Gospel. The difficulty is about supporting my wife, but I think that I can do so. I can still retain my place at the bank, and study, under Mr. Berkely's care, in the afternoon and evening."

"I rejoice in your choice, my son, and would willingly bear the expense of your education, only that it would never do to be separated from your wife. I think, perhaps, it would be better for you to continue at the bank for this year; for the next year, you could go to the Seminary, and you can board with Eveleen near the institution. I will bear all the expenses cheerfully."

"Thank you, dear father. I will now make known my wishes to Mr. Berkely and my wife, and I doubt not that God will give us his blessing."

After an hour spent in the joys of reunion, Frank and Eveleen, accompanied by Mrs. Austin, returned to their sweet little home, happy in the prospect of family harmony.

"Dear mother, is there any hope that father will ever forgive me?" whispered Eveleen, when alone with her mother.

"I think so, my child, though it will not do to say too much; time will cure all."

The mother was delighted with the neat housekeeping of her

daughter, and wondered how she could have learned so much ; but when she saw the devotion of the young pair to each other, she felt that affection had been the teacher, and had drawn out all the capabilities of her woman's heart.

When in the retirement of her own room, Eveleen said, "Frank, do you not think that Gerald is very cold to Edith? His manner is very singular, and if I did not know better, I should certainly say that Blanche is the chosen idol."

"I thought so myself, Evy ; but we must remember that Gerald is a worshipper of beauty ; he may only admire her as an artist. I cannot think it possible that any one who has ever loved Edith could, for one moment, think of Blanche."

"That depends entirely upon the person, Frank," said his little wife. "My own opinion is, that Edith is too lofty for Gerald ; I do not think that he can sympathize with her fervent nature. If I mistake not, there are more bonds of sympathy between Gerald and Blanche."

"I should be sorry, Eveleen, for I know the depth and purity of Edith's heart, and she has loved Gerald Fortescue all her life ; if he disappoints her, her heart will be a withered thing."

Both felt strong apprehensions, for they saw much, in their visits at Ravenswood, to lead them to fear for Edith. When Frank communicated his desires to Eveleen with regard to the ministry, she encouraged him, although she said, "Who would have thought that gay little Eveleen Austin would ever have been the wife of a minister? But there are strange things happening around us. I am sure, Frank, that you will do a great deal of good."

On the Sunday after this communication, it was a communion season. Eveleen felt more and more keenly the separation which existed between herself and her husband, in these holy bonds. On this day, when she saw Frank approaching the table without her, her spirit was deeply touched, and, as the congregation left the church, she remembered Coxe's beautiful lines :

"The organ played sweet music,
While as, on Easter day,
All heartless from the altar,
The heedless went away:
And down the broad aisle crowding
They seemed a funeral train,
That were burying their spirits
To the *music of that strain*.

"Oh, the soul-dirge, how it echoed
The emptied aisles along,
As the open street grew crowded
With the full and pouring throng!
And then—again the voices;
Ha! the soul-dirge! hear it play!
And the pensive, pensive whisper,
'Will ye also go away?'"

"Will ye also go away?" thought Eveleen; "and from whom? from my bleeding Saviour?" Wider became the distance between the husband and wife. Loving and affectionate as they still were, they both felt that there was one subject on which there was no heartfelt sympathy, and that, the dearest, highest, holiest which can interest an immortal being.

Since Eveleen's reconciliation with her mother, many comforts had been added to their establishment, and, to her great delight, her piano among the rest. But her fears were much excited for Frank's health when she found that, after his day's toil at the bank, he spent so many hours at his studies. His education had been thorough, his talents were superior, and Mr. Berkely looked forward to his ordination with peculiar satisfaction; but his wife was alarmed when she saw his incessant application, and obtained from him a promise that he would always devote his evenings, until bed-time, to her. This promise he faithfully kept, but frequently the midnight hour saw him still at his studies.

At the close of the first year at Woodbine Cottage, another life was added to the household, and Eveleen named her darling boy Frank, after his father. It was a source of the purest delight, and after the advent of the little stranger Eveleen's

character appeared to deepen; the holy responsibilities of a mother awakened all that was fervent in her nature. She realized that none but a Christian could possibly perform these sacred obligations, and she sought and found that grace which she so much needed. Bound together by new and holier ties henceforth they pursued their pilgrim path together, partaking of the same joys, sustained by the same blessed hopes.



CHAPTER XXII.

IS IT MADGE?



PEEP into Madge's journal will depict her feelings after her convalescence.

"They say that I am better, but I am very weak. So many visions of death and eternity pass before me that it seems to me as if I am approaching the spirit-land; and what if I am? Am I prepared to meet my Saviour? How long have I been sick? They say it is but a few weeks; it seems to me like months. So much has passed in the history of my soul; such hours of abasement! such a falling of the scales from my eyes! such revelations of my pride and arrogance! such hardness of heart to my Heavenly Father! such ingratitude to my father, to Edith, and to Ralph! How could I ever say that my mother neglected me? Nothing but the dark clouds of jealousy could have obscured the sunshine of her love. How could I be so misled by Josephine?

"Where have I seen any of the boasted philanthropy of these Socialists? Forsaken by Josephine, neglected by the whole society, the disciples of the blessed Jesus have taken me in, and, like the good Samaritan, have poured oil into my wounds. The instructions of my early years have all returned; they have visited me in the night-watches, and whispered their blessed lessons of peace, and truth, and love. I feel as if I had been travelling over high, steep mountains.

through gloomy ravines, with dark clouds looming constantly over my head, searching for something in the distance, which was ever eluding my grasp; falling into deep chasms, tearing my hands, and lacerating my feet in my endeavors to extricate myself, until, like a poor, weary traveller, I see light in the distance; now it comes nearer and nearer. I have long ago laid down the weapons of my rebellion. My pride is abased, and I see the silver thread which leads me to my Saviour! I want rest; rest for my wearied spirit. O, Ralph! I want to tell you all. I shall be cold and hard no more. O! just to see your noble face, once again; just to ask forgiveness; just to hear your voice,—your clear manly tones! Their very sound would strengthen me. If God spares my life, what a different course shall I pursue! If he will only restore me to Edith, how sweet it will be to aid her in her noble deeds of humble charity! There shall I find abundant occupation for all the talents which God has given me, and then Ralph will counsel me; his strong arm will uphold me; his clear intellect will guide me; his manly piety will cheer me. What a blessing to have such a friend! I have deserved none of these things. I have merited God's displeasure, and I receive nothing at his hands but goodness. Shall I not devote myself, with all that I have, and all that I am, to his service? Dear sainted mother's prayers are answered at last. I feel that in God's own good time all our dear family will be gathered home to heaven. And where now is Ralph?"

After his conversation with the stranger, he was fully convinced that he had traced the wanderer, and said, "O, Madge! have I waited for you so long, and shall I find you suffering? Or, perhaps, you are no more among us. But no, I feel that you are coming, Madge; coming back to Ralph, to your home, to God." With these hopeful thoughts, after writing a few hasty lines to Edith, without further delay he set off for P——, travelling night and day.

When he arrived in sight of the Institution, he was almost afraid to enter: it had a gloomy appearance, embowered thickly in dark trees, the windows closed. His heart misgave

him. With a trembling hand he rang the bell, and asking for Miss Fortescue, that lady made her appearance, and received him with a stiff bow.

"Can you give me any information concerning Miss Clifford?" asked Ralph.

"She has left us," answered Josephine, haughtily. "She has proved herself an unworthy disciple of our society, and I know nothing about her."

"Do you not know that she is ill?" asked Ralph, indignantly.

"I have heard something of the kind; but I have washed my hands of her entirely," replied Josephine.

"Can it be possible that, calling yourself a woman, you could abandon the poor misguided girl in a strange place to such a fate? That you could forsake her, suffering, perhaps dying, and you the person who led her from her home and her duty!"

Josephine placed herself indignantly before Ralph, and, extending her arm in a threatening attitude, said, "Beware, how you use such language to me. I will not bear it!" and ringing the bell, she directed a servant to show this man the door, and haughtily swept from the room. Ralph then inquired for Mr. Harper, and finding the parsonage, he waited impatiently in the parlor. While seated there, he observed a familiar book; opening it, on the first page he observed the name of Madge in a well-known hand. His eye was next attracted by a portfolio; he opened it, when a number of scraps of poetry fell out, all breathing a tone of sadness, and signed by the same familiar name. In a few minutes, Mrs. Harper entered the parlor.

"I called, madam," said he, "to inquire for a young lady named Margaret Crawford. Is such a person here?"

"She is," replied the kind lady; "she has been very ill, but, we trust, is now convalescent, although feeble still; she is just beginning to sit up."

"Can I see her?" asked Ralph.

"Will you send your name, sir?"

Taking his card, Mrs. Harper left the room, and quickly returned, with permission for him to enter. He knocked at the door. A very faint voice said, "Come in," and on entering, he was so shocked at the sight which met his gaze, that he could but exclaim, "Can this be Madge?" It was, indeed, but O, how changed! Seated in an easy chair, propped up by pillows, the bright eyes were dimmed, the rich, clear complexion pale and haggard, the luxuriant hair cropped, and her form withered to nothing.

On extending her poor little wasted hand, Ralph could not refrain from dropping a large tear upon the trembling fingers. Raising her swimming eyes to his face, she could not speak for some minutes, and when she did, it was with a choked utterance that she said, "O, Ralph! how I have waited for you! I knew that you would come, but O, how long it has seemed! Weary nights and tiresome days I have spent in watching for you, and now I feel as if my toilsome watch is ended, and I am at peace."

Folding her little hands together, while the large tears rolled down her pallid countenance, her head dropped, but it was supported on Ralph's shoulder, who said, tenderly, "It has been a long vigil to me, Madge, but I always said you would return, even when you were so cold and haughty. I knew the warm throbbings of that little heart would seek a haven of rest at last."

"Ralph, you are too good," replied Madge. "I deserve nothing but reproaches, and I receive only kindness. Can you forgive me, Ralph, for the ingratitude which I have shown to you?"

"You have been forgiven long ago, Madge. I knew that you were misled, and that our Father would bring you back again. Have you found peace in the Redeemer, Madge?"

"I trust so; I have no hope of pardon but through his merits. All I desire is to be his forever."

Madge was full of questions concerning the dear family circle. When she heard the tidings of Frank's return to his home, of his sweet wife, and of his present holy life, she was overpowered

with feeling, and said, "O Ralph! is not God good to us? One by one, he is bringing us home."

"When do you think that you will be able to travel?" asked Ralph.

"I shall recover my strength rapidly now," replied Madge. "Now that my heart is relieved, I think that in about a week we can set off. I am so anxious to get home."

Unwearied in his attentions, he watched over the young girl, and so soon as it was considered safe, prepared to return. With many thanks to the dear friends who had been so kind to the sick young stranger, they took their departure, and travelled slowly, resting sometimes a whole day, before it was deemed advisable to proceed. At the end of two weeks they arrived in sight of home. Madge had been absent for more than a year. It was now the day before Christmas. Edith had heard from Ralph, who led her to hope that they might be with them on Christmas eve. The household were full of eager anticipation. The Christmas weaths were hung in the drawing-room and library; holly boughs, with their red berries, mingled with laurel, adorned the hall; glowing fires were kindled in the rooms; lights blazed everywhere, and a look of joyous expectation beamed in every countenance. Uncle Peter was constantly on the look-out; nurse bustled about in her best silk dress and new Christmas cap; Aunt Priscilla was busy, making the large pound-cake; and Mr. Clifford, wrapped in his furs, was restlessly pacing the piazza.

"O, massa, there comes a carriage!" said Uncle Peter. "Can that be Miss Madge?"

The carriage drove up rapidly, and was found to contain Frank and his family, who had come to spend the holidays at home. There was somewhat of a shade of disappointment on the father's face, who was so eagerly looking for his daughter. The dinner hour had passed, still no Madge: it was feared that she would not arrive that day. Towards evening, Edith, who was watching eagerly, perceived a carriage, with a large quantity of baggage, coming slowly up the avenue. Her heart gave one bound, almost sick with mingled feelings of joy and fear.

When it drew near, she saw a pale face, supported on the shoulder of Ralph Cameron, and in another minute the carriage-door opened, and lifting out the wasted form, that seemed no heavier than a child, silently he gave her into the arms of her sister.

"Dearest Madge, welcome home!" whispered Edith, with feelings almost too strong for utterance; and as Madge turned upon her those beautiful eyes, now swimming in tears of tenderness, and answered, "Let us thank God, Edith, for all his goodness," the good sister felt as if the evil spirit had departed, and that, in her right mind, Madge had been restored; but, as she looked upon her face and withered form, she feared, to die. Leading her into the house, she was received in the arms of her father, and folded to Frank's heart with fervent love. Eveleen, who had heard her sad story, welcomed her warmly, for her husband's sake, and the twins felt that a new feature of joy was added to the happiness of Christmas eve. Seated in the library, where they had so often met before, its bright bituminous fire imparted a fresh glow to the happy faces that welcomed the young wanderer, and illumined a beautiful portrait of Mrs. Clifford, that seemed to smile upon the joyous reunion. Edith, raising a curtain that concealed a table, at the end of the room, disclosed the gifts prepared for the occasion. In the excitement, it had almost been forgotten that Madge was a weary traveller. Taking her to her room, Edith aided her in unrobing, and after taking some slight refreshment, persuaded her to lie down.

After a short sleep, dressing for supper, she returned to the family circle, and entering the library, lay on the sofa, while Edith distributed the gifts of love. Expecting Madge, each had prepared her a little offering. She received them tearfully, saying, "How could I ever wander from this home of love, to freeze among such icebergs as I have been with?" She was delighted with all her gifts, especially Eveleen's, which was a very handsome gilt morocco needle-book, completely furnished with gold thimble, scissors, &c. "I thank you, dear sister," said Madge. "I wish to learn how to use these skilfully, and

shall often come to you for lessons in the accomplishment." A handsome set of the British Poets was the gift of Ralph Cameron, who had been in the secret; from her father, a pretty work-table; from Edith, a handsome wrapper, and chamber-slippers, the work of her own hand; from Blanche and Adele, a handsome pin and bracelets, with their own hair; from Frank, a portfolio. Little Lilly, who was at home for Christmas, had not forgotten her offering, and had knit a beautiful nubia; and little Emily had presented a small Bible. Though so pale and languid, a soft glow of happiness beamed from the eyes and illumined the whole face of Madge Clifford; and all who looked upon her felt that a new life shone out of those lustrous eyes, and trembled around the large, though speaking mouth. Looking around the dear household room, she took Edith's hand, and while she kissed it affectionately, said, "At home, dear sister, to wander no more. O, how often have I thought of all your goodness; and of you, dear Miss Arnold, how powerful have been the lessons which I have heard from you! When I contrasted the humble piety, the sweet feminine graces of this happy circle, with the bold effrontery of the masculine women with whom I have been associated, I wonder that I could ever have been deluded by their follies; but my besetting sins, pride of intellect and arrogance, led me astray, and I desire now to seek, above all things, for deep humility."

Under the kind and watchful care of her sister, Madge recovered rapidly, the proud spirit seemed wholly subdued, and, under the faithful instruction of Ralph Cameron, she exhibited daily more and more of the docile, teachable spirit of a true disciple. When absent in the city, he left her well supplied with a course of reading, which she earnestly pursued. Her mind appeared to recover its tone, as her health became better. Eagerly she watched for the weekly return of her friend, and might always be seen at the old elm tree, watching for Ralph's approach. The winter passed rapidly away, and the spring dawned upon the family at Ravenswood with peculiar brightness. Seated one morning at her chamber window, Madge spied the first fresh violets, and running down to the

lawn, their sweet fragrance brought back the memory of her mother, for it was the custom of her children to gather them for her so soon as they appeared; and each vied with the other in efforts to be the first with their fragrant offering. Now, that dear parent was laid in the silent grave, and Madge could but drop repentant tears over the sweet flowers, when she remembered how seldom she had been among the eager group that brought the gift of love; but now her warm affections, once enkindled, clung around her sister Edith, and gathering the modest violets, she laid them on her sister's dressing-table, with a little note, breathing a sister's love, and signed "Repentant Madge." Winter had passed from Madge Clifford's heart, the bonds of ice had thawed beneath the power of a Saviour's love, and spring, with all its sweet buds and blossoms, its singing birds and purling streams, had dawned in its stead, and commenced its happy reign in the young bosom.

On Saturday evening, her airy little figure might generally be seen, with eager step walking down the broad avenue of elms, in anxious expectation of her friend. On one of these occasions she had taken her usual walk, and was seated under the old elm, waiting for Ralph's appearance. In a short time, a manly figure, waving his hand, was seen rapidly approaching, and in a few minutes, Madge, leaning on his arm, turned down to their favorite haunt on the river-shore.

"Well, Madge, how has the reading progressed this week?"

"I have finished the volume which you left, and will show you my notes when we get home. Then I have been very busy, helping Edith in her family concerns; in reading the paper for father, teaching in the parish school, in my turn, and visiting sister's pensioners. Indeed, Ralph, the weeks are all too short for me now."

Looking affectionately upon the young girl, Ralph replied, "Is not your busy life, now so fully occupied in active, ennobling duties, much happier than your former dreamy existence?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Madge; "and whom shall I thank, Ralph, but you, my brother, my friend? If you had forsaken me, where should I have been?"

Madge carried her portfolio in her hand, for, concealing nothing from Ralph, she frequently submitted her scraps to his inspection. When seated on the shore, she directed Ralph's attention to the beautiful Hudson, as it flowed so gently at their feet, and opening her portfolio, handed him the few lines which it had called forth:

The music of your rippling waves
 Will often soothe the memory's ear,
 When, 'midst the din of earthly care,
 I long your gentle voice to hear:
 Your shady banks, your placid breast,
 Cooling the fever of my brow:
 I oft shall long to kiss your waves,
 As the light oar is kissing now.
 Flow on, flow on, thou gentle stream,
 Bear on thy bosom other hearts,
 And be to them the charmed voice
 Which bids discordant thoughts depart.

"Those are very expressive lines, Madge. They describe the effect of the lovely river. It often discourses very sweet music."

"There is one subject upon which I wish to ask your advice," said Madge, timidly. "I think that I am really changed. I have entirely cast away all my skeptical follies. I desire to serve God all the days of my life, and think that I ought openly to profess his name. What do you think of it, Ralph?"

"I am truly gratified to hear you say so, for I wished the proposition to come from yourself. I have great confidence in the reality of your change, and doubt not that you will be a welcome guest at the Redeemer's table. Now, dear Madge, how sweet is the bond which henceforth unites us,—one Lord, one heaven, one home! Let us pursue our pilgrim path together." Taking the little hand in his own, while he raised his eyes to heaven, he invoked God's richest

blessing upon the youthful Christian. They walked home quietly. The birds sang their evening song from every tree; the sun gradually declined, tinging hill, and sky, and water, with his glories, while the boatman sang his homeward song, as he gently rowed down the placid river. All sounds and sights were serene, soothing, peaceful, in perfect accordance with the blissful thoughts that filled the hearts of Ralph and his young companion. When Madge communicated her wishes to Edith, she received her warmest approval. Folding her affectionately in her arms, she whispered, "Madge, is not ours a faithful God? One by one coming home to him; now we are sisters indeed." So marked was the change in the young girl, that, as they observed her gentle, subdued, loving deportment, could not but ask, "Can this, indeed, be Madge Clifford? Once so haughty, so sullen, so rebellious! Now so gentle, so loving, so kind!"

Mr. Clifford was deeply impressed by the greatness of the transformation, and could not doubt that it was all divine. A bright Sabbath dawned upon Ravenswood. It was the day of Madge's first communion; and when Ralph approached the table in company with the young girl, it was a happy moment, for he felt that there was sealed a bond which bound them to Christ forever. Edith, Miss Arnold, Frank, Eveleen, Madge, and Ralph, all bowed together at the Saviour's board; and as the faithful sister felt herself thus surrounded, sweet were the visions of future glory in store for those who loved God and she blessed renewedly the sister's solemn vow which had brought such holy fruits. It is true that Gerald was not there, for his attendance upon the ordinances of the Gospel was fitful: this was a severe trial of her faith, but she laid even this at Jesus' feet, and he bore the burden for her. From this day the course of Madge Clifford was onward, upward; and though the old man strove for the mastery, and the old pride of her heart tempted her sorely, yet she had really buckled on the Christian's armor, and in Jesus' name she conquered.

As light dawned increasingly upon her path, the old moodiness passed away; she became cheerful, loving, and even gay.

Indeed, it sometimes seemed that she was just beginning to know a little of her joys of childhood, for Madge had never been like a child; but now, its sweet simplicity and sportiveness seemed, for the first time, to shine out of her young heart. Under the influence of her new motive of action, her talents shone out in all their natural brightness; but they shone no more for herself, but for her Divine Master. Many were the hours of heart-communion between herself and Ralph Cameron, for she was no longer ashamed to be directed by a stronger spirit than a clearer intellect.

"What would you advise me, Ralph, with regard to my pen?" one day asked Madge. "Do you think it unadvisable for a woman to write?"

"By no means, Madge," replied her friend. "Where God has given peculiar talents, they are to be exercised, but for his glory."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Ralph, for I feel so impelled to use my pen, that really it would be a severe trial for me to lay it by. I have been, for a long time, writing a tale, which I have never shown to you; but now I want your opinion. If you think it will do any good, I will finish it, and then your revision will be very useful to me; but if I ever publish it, it will be with a fictitious name. I would not, personally, encounter public criticism."

"I will give you my candid opinion, Madge. If disapproved, could you, willingly, give up the idea of publishing?"

Madge raised her eyes to Ralph's face, beaming with tenderness, and replied, "It would be a trial, Ralph, but if you say so, I will cheerfully give it up. Your judgment is always best."

Ralph was deeply affected by this sweet, womanly confidence, and turning upon her a look which made her drop her eyes, said, "Madge, have you ever thought what is the secret of the interest which, for these many years, I have felt in you?"

"I have always thought that it was a wonderful thing that a young man like you, Ralph, should have been so forbearing,

towards a wilful child ; so kind towards a perverse, rebellious girl ; so hopeful, so constant, in the darkest days of my banishment."

"Now listen unto me, Madge, for the time has come for the history of that interest. When first I saw you at Ravenswood, the quiet, reserved, haughty child, I saw beneath the surface a highly gifted genius, a heart warm and glowing, a soul born for higher things than the mere frivolities of fashionable life, and I resolved, Madge, to unlock that casket, to melt that nature, to polish that diamond. Even when you had strayed farthest from the paths of feminine propriety, and had cast off the best friends of your youth, though you caused me so much suffering, I never ceased to hope. You remember that I told you that you would come back to Ralph ; and has it not been so? And now I tell you, Madge, that I have always loved you, purely, truly, fondly, and in the distance I have pictured a domestic scene, where Madge Clifford, restored, purified, elevated, should preside as the fireside-spirit. Shall it be so, Madge?"

She had bowed her head in speechless emotion while Ralph was speaking, and now, raising her speaking eyes to his face, while her whole countenance was radiant with joy, she replied, "Ralph, I had always thought it a great honor to be chosen as your friend, for I could not see why you should pass by so much more lovely and attractive ; but to be your chosen companion for life, to lean upon you always, to comfort, to cheer, to bless your home, such honor is too much for me. I can scarcely believe what I hear, only that I know your noble truth."

"I mean, dear Madge," continued Ralph, "all that I say. I would rather own this little hand than that of the most peerless beauty that walks the earth. May I claim it as my own?"

Madge laid her hand in Ralph's warm grasp, and whispered, "Thine, dear Ralph, for life."

The vow was given at their favorite rock on the river-shore, where they had spent so many happy hours together: now

endeared more than ever as the scene of their betrothal. It was evening when they returned; the pale moon shone down upon two happy hearts, and the evening star smiled upon their union. Madge remembered her mother, when she looked upon it from her chamber window, for it had shone upon many a twilight lesson in the days of her childhood; now, she felt assured that her dear parent would have approved of her choice, and retiring to rest, her last thoughts were of the kind Heavenly Father who had guided all her pilgrim steps in safety and in peace.

"Well, dear me!" said Uncle Peter, "what has come over Miss Madge? She is always singing about the house, like a merry bird. I never seed sich a change. I guess, however, that Massa Ralph has something to do with it, for I'm sartain sure that he loves our dear Miss Madge more than his two eyes."

"I am right glad of it," answered old nurse; "for he's a good man, and though he's got an eagle eye and a firm lip, the blessed Master keeps it all right, and I know he'll make Miss Madge happy."

"That's what I says," replied Uncle Peter. "I 'spect he's got a mighty high temper, but he's a good Christian for all that; for you know, nurse, there was a mighty great difference among our Lord's disciples: Peter wasn't like John, and Matthew wasn't like Paul, but they were alike in one thing,—they all loved the blessed Master, and many on 'em laid down their lives for his sake."

The faithful old servants rejoiced in the days of prosperity, and wept when sorrow overtook any of the house of Ravenswood. Edith approved, wholly, of her sister's choice, and Mr. Clifford bestowed his warmest blessing. When Ralph saw the projected manuscript, he was fully convinced that it would be a successful effort, and kindly spent many hours revising the volume, in company with Madge. These were pleasant evenings, for being so near the city, he often came up from New York in the evening boat, and went down in the morning.

These were happy seasons, and, under the influence of her

new-born hopes, Madge flitted about like a joyous bird, waiting on her sister, pouring out her wealth of love on the family circle. All the power of her fervent nature fully awakened, the sunlight of Christian love had taken full possession of her heart, beamed in her eye, sparkled in her smile, and thrilled the heart, by the sweetness of her rich, melting voice. And how was it now with Edith? As Madge's hopes brightened, Edith's gradually faded: not that Gerald treated her coldly, for he was kind, considerate, tender, and failed in none of those attentions which she knew to be her due; but there was a felt difference in all. She could not but fear that these were only the results of his convictions of duty. She saw that he avoided Blanche constantly, and that her sister's spirits daily sank. His conduct towards her was ceremonious, distant, polite. She frequently surprised Blanche in tears; found that she had lost her interest in general amusement; spent much of her time in her room, or wandering out alone, and was particularly distant to Edith. What could it all mean? Edith often asked her heart. She would seek Blanche, and try to obtain her confidence: she could not bear to see her so unhappy. One day she had been peculiarly sad; had eaten nothing, complained of not being well, and early retired to her room, Edith followed her there, and, knocking at the door, Blanche, said, "Who is there?"

"'Tis I, Blanche, your sister; open the door."

When the door opened, Blanche returned to her seat by the window, in a desponding attitude; leaning her head upon her hands, she burst into tears.

Edith advanced, and drawing her tenderly towards her, said, "Blanche, my sister, what is the matter? Can I comfort you?"

"Oh, Edith! don't speak so kindly; don't touch me; it kills me, it breaks my heart: I am so miserable."

"Can't you confide in me, dearest?"

"In you, Edith? No—never; I cannot be despised by my sister. Leave me alone; I can bear my trouble; I deserve it all. Do not ask me any more questions."

"Am I not your sister, Blanche? Almost your mother? Would it not relieve your heart to confide in a friend?" answered Edith.

"It is impossible, Edith; you must not know what distresses me; it would only cause more misery. Only go, sister, I cannot bear to be alone with you."

"What can you mean, dear Blanche? Have you ceased to love me?" answered her sister.

"Ceased to love you! No, Edith, that can never be; it is because I love you, I venerate you, that I am so miserable. I cannot bear to give you pain."

"Well, dear Blanche, if I cannot obtain your confidence, I can direct you to a stronger, wiser, better Friend; if you are in perplexity, ask for wisdom; if in distress, ask for comfort. I will remember you, dearest, at a throne of grace;" and placing her arm affectionately around Blanche, she found that she trembled violently, and shrank from her embrace. Greatly preplexed, Edith left the room, wondering at the mysterious conduct of her sister.

These was but one place of refuge for Edith in her trials, and thither she repaired for comfort and guidance. There were many subjects of disquietude around her. Gerald was changed, evidently unhappy, and neglected the house of God. Edith felt that deeper shadows were gathering around her daily life. Sometimes, when drawing contrasts between herself and other young persons of her acquaintance, she was tempted to repine, and asked why she should be called upon to bear such a heavy yoke in her youth. Checking the evil thought, she remembered that discipline must fit us for the heavenly inheritance, and that it is "through much tribulation" that we enter the kingdom of heaven. Gerald, as usual, spent his week in New York, attending to his profession—he was greatly encouraged; his pictures attracted much attention among connoisseurs—but Saturday evening always brought him to Oak Hall, where he spent his Sundays.

Filled with apprehensions for the one she loved, Edith resolved to seek a private interview; for, although Gerald had

not appeared to desire these seasons of communion as formerly, yet duty led her, for once, to lay aside the trammels of ceremony. Saturday evening came again, and instead of coming to Ravenswood first, as he had been accustomed to do, he went to Oak Hall, and came over in the evening. Edith met him kindly, Blanche coldly, and Gerald's salutation was much embarrassed. Blanche retired in a few minutes, and Edith was left alone with the young man.

"Shall we walk, Gerald?" said Edith; and taking his arm, they pursued their way, silently, to the old trysting spot.

When reaching the old tree, they seated themselves, and Edith, with a trembling voice, said, "Gerald, what has come between us? There is something, some coldness has crept in to destroy the harmony which once existed."

"Edith," replied Gerald, "I repeat, with greater force than ever, that I am wholly unworthy of you; you are as far above me as heaven is above earth, and I cannot reach you. I have become worldly, I have lost my interest in serious things; my heart is a scene of wild disorder."

"I thought so, Gerald. When you went to New York the winter that my sisters did, I feared that you would be led astray; was it not then?"

"It was, Edith. I was led on first because I liked to be with them, and then I became fascinated with worldly pleasures. I forgot God, Edith, I forgot my vow, and nothing is left but the stinging remembrance of that solemn day when we both vowed to be the Lord's. Your path, since then, has been that of 'the shining light, which shineth brighter and brighter until the perfect day,' and my feet have stumbled on the dark mountains of sin; and, would you believe it, Edith," he whispered hoarsely, "even of gloomy unbelief!"

"O Gerald! be persuaded to return; you cannot be happy wandering away from God!" answered Edith.

"O my friend, you do not know half of my misery; you never can. If you would only consent to be mine at once, you might save me, Edith, from unspeakable sorrow."

"You know, dear Gerald, that is impossible. The claims

of home are binding upon me, and I cannot forsake my family; but no human arm can restore you to paths of holiness; none but Jesus can meet the wants of your soul. Promise me, Gerald, to be more punctual in your attendance upon Church. Go with me to-morrow, commence a new life. Remember, dear Gerald, your Christian vows; humble yourself before God, and he will receive a prodigal, coming back to his Father's house."

Slowly they returned to the house, and Edith could not but contrast the anticipations of hope and love of years gone by, with the sad despondency which filled her bosom as she paced the same avenue, and watched the twilight scene from the same chamber window. Clouds gathered in the horizon. The sweet murmurs of hope which rustled among the green trees on that happy evening seemed now like the low wailings of a sorrowing spirit. The moon, which shed its soft light upon the two as they stood on the piazza on the evening of their betrothal, now seemed to wear a mournful face, as it shone upon the same path and witnessed the altered feelings of the youthful pair.

Sunday came again, with its silvery chimes, calling pilgrims to their father's board, with its sweet messages from the skies, with its chaunted hymns and solemn worship, and with its hopes of heaven. Edith's peaceful countenance, as she met Gerald, spoke of communion with heaven—she had been with Jesus—and when she asked him to accompany her to church, he could not refuse the voice, which seemed almost like a message from the skies. All the family, excepting Blanche and her father, accompanied Edith. Mr. Berkely preached a solemn sermon, and Edith joined heartily in the beautiful hymn,

"Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land!"

She realized that bread from heaven fell that day around her pilgrim steps. Sustained by the precious manna, she gathered strength for her journey.

A new source of anxiety was presented to her in the exceed-

ing delicacy of her brother's appearance. After church she hastened to him, and said, "Dear Frank, do you not confine yourself too much? Remember that you have a body to take care of as well as a soul."

"Do not be uneasy, sister; I do not think that I am very much out of health. Eveleen watches me too closely to let me injure myself."

When Edith went home she communicated her fears to her father, and suggested the propriety of sending Frank's favorite horse. Accordingly, early on Monday morning, to Uncle Peter's great delight, he led Cæsar over to the cottage, with the particular request, from Edith and her father, that Frank would ride daily.

"Well, old friend, I am glad to see you," said Frank, as he patted the animal's head, who gave sufficient evidence that he recognized his young master by whinnying, neighing, and pawing the ground. Early next morning Eveleen saw that the horse was in waiting, and one hour each day was thus redeemed from his intense application to study. Under this new course his health appeared to improve. Little Frank became daily more dear to the young parents, and in the sweet intercourse of holy affection, and in devotion to the service of their Redeemer, the little household at Woodbine Cottage was truly a blessed and a happy family. Frank continued to pursue his studies, under the care of Mr. Berkely, for one year; at the close of that time the husband, wife, and child removed for one year to the Seminary at A——, closing their cottage until their return. They missed their pleasant home, but, as Frank knew that it was important for him to spend at least one year at the Seminary, he consented to his father's arrangement, who paid the rent of his humble home in his absence.

At the appointed time he was ordained, and returned to N——, as the assistant minister of Mr. Berkely, it being his particular province to assist in the services of the parish church in the morning, and to preach in a distant school-house in the afternoon, to a congregation of extremely poor and ignorant persons. Eveleen interested herself greatly in this mission,

teaching on Sunday, visiting through the week, and by her gentle ministry and unfailing love, cheering and sustaining her husband. A troublesome cough, which she observed in the morning, alarmed her not a little. She urged the rides on horseback, and watched carefully; but her woman's heart trembled for the safety of one whom she feared that she nearly idolized.

Frank was a successful and popular minister, and his good pastor hailed with delight his early promise of future usefulness. He had not been long engaged in his country parish, ere he received several "calls" to more important fields of labor; but he judged wisely that companionship with Mr. Berkely was of incalculable benefit, and for the present he sought retirement.

Edith looked back upon her sister's vow with peculiar joy, when she saw Frank, Madge, and Eveleen, all partakers of her own blessed hopes. Madge was very busy, in her leisure hours, with her book; Ralph was deeply interested, and encouraged the young girl in her effort to do good. He could scarcely realize the docile, teachable girl, to be the same wilful Madge of former years; but the Gospel had transformed her wholly, and sitting at Jesus' feet, she had learned humility. Unknown to Madge, Ralph was also engaged in literary pursuits; for, although a lawyer by profession, he found time daily to indulge in his favorite pursuits.



CHAPTER XXIII.

A WRECK UPON A SUMMER STREAM.

IN the meanwhile, the dross of a corrupt nature was in the crucible of trial, undergoing the process of purification. The unseen Refiner sat closely by the melting ore, and Edith Clifford's was the character upon which he was now bestowing all careful supervision. She daily prayed for holiness. She knew the plague-spot of her own heart to be pride, hateful pride, and taking that heart, daily, and laying it at Jesus' feet, she was willing that he should purify it in his own wise and wonderful manner. Her warm affections, her deep devotion of soul, were sources of great temptation to idolatry. She had built largely upon Gerald's love, upon Gerald's truth and fidelity, but she was deeply convinced that her airy fabric was fading in vapor. She could not tell how, but her heart was a faithful monitor. The confidence, and even playful familiarity, which had formerly existed between Gerald and Blanche, had all disappeared, and a fitful, irregular conduct, had usurped its place. Sometimes a degree of tenderness, that Edith was ashamed to acknowledge, disturbed her; then, again, a studied coldness on the part of each. Sometimes Gerald was even rude, then Blanche was always sorrowful. "What does it all mean?" thought Edith. She endeavored, as much as possible, to busy herself about her usual occupations, her domestic cares, her sister Emily,

her harp, her parish school, her pensioners, which were not a few; all, by turns, engrossed her attention, and left her but little time for fruitless meditation; she endeavored to commit all to God, and left her destiny wholly in his gracious hands.

One summer evening the young people all started for a walk in the woods. The evening was inviting, and they rambled on to the distance of a mile from the house. Suddenly, the sky became overcast, the moon hid herself behind dark clouds, which every moment became more threatening, until the heavens were shrouded in blackness. The wind arose, first in low, hoarse murmurs, but quickening rapidly, in a few minutes, it roared through the forest, cracking boughs of trees, filling the air with dust, and leaves, and flying branches. Distant thunder muttered fearful warning; vivid flashes of lurid lightning for a moment illumined the darkness. There was every appearance of a terrific tempest. The very trees rocked. It was with the utmost difficulty that the party could keep their feet. Sometimes, blown up against a tall tree, the frightened females stood a moment to regain their strength, or to avoid some fearful blast that threatened to carry them away.

"Let us go home," said Edith; "we shall have a fearful tempest." She had scarcely uttered the words, when a vivid flash lit up the dark woods, and, succeeded by a crash of heaven's artillery, blanched their faces with terror. The rain descended in torrents, the wind increased in fury, flash after flash blinded their eyes, and the pealing thunder rattled around them in fearful crashes. Suddenly, Blanche was lifted from her feet, whirled to a considerable distance, and thrown violently upon the ground. Edith was near, and Gerald, in agony, bent over the prostrate girl, exclaiming "Blanche! my life! my love! are you hurt? Speak! You will drive me to distraction."

"Gerald, leave me. I am not much hurt, only my temple is bruised. Go, Gerald, go to Edith; she is in danger."

"Blanche, Blanche! do not drive me away! I cannot

leave you ;" and, lifting her from the ground, he took her in his arms, and rushed on through the tempest, regardless of any whom he had left behind. Ralph encircled Madge with his strong arm, and Edith, with a bitter groan, taking Adele by the waist, said, "We must take care of ourselves, Adele; there is fearful danger." Several times the pair were thrown to the ground, or dashed against trees, but after much effort, and completely drenched with rain, they succeeded in reaching the house.

Entering the library, they found Blanche, in a fainting condition, extended on the sofa. She had received a severe blow, and the blood was streaming down her beautiful face, now pale as a breathless corpse. Gerald was leaning over her, unconscious of the presence of others. "Blanche! Blanche! open your eyes! Oh! she is dead! she is dead!" he exclaimed, in agony.

Edith advanced. Sternly pushing him aside, she said, "Go, Gerald. Let me minister to my sister. You are not fit to be here. Leave the room."

She loosened the clothes, bathed the bleeding temple, and applied restoratives, though her own heart was bursting with anguish. A dark suggestion shot through her soul, as she stood looking upon the prostrate form of her beautiful sister, whom she now deeply felt was her rival. A secret, undefined wish, and a feeling of disappointment, when she saw Blanche unclose her beautiful eyes, revealed to her fully the nature of that dark temptation which, for a moment, shrouded her spirit, and led her, almost involuntarily, to lay her hand upon her eyes, lest the secret iniquity should be disclosed to others. It was the thought of a second, hissed into her spirit by some demon of darkness. Blanche looked around her wildly. "Where am I? Who struck me? O, Gerald! dear, dear Gerald, go leave me!" and bursting into tears, she threw herself upon Edith's bosom, and wept convulsively.

"Sister, I am hurt very much. My side is very painful, and my temple is fearfully cut."

Upon examination, it was found that a deep gash was cut

above the temple, under the hair, and that her side was severely bruised. In her agitated state, Edith had her conveyed to her room, where, with a crushed and aching spirit, she sat by and soothed the wretched girl, who continued to utter incoherent cries, indicating great suffering, which was evidently chiefly mental.

When Edith retired that night, deep was the communion of her spirit with her God and Saviour. She sought earnestly to know his will, and resolved, when that was done, meekly to perform it. Joining Gerald next day, a blanched cheek and quivering lip betrayed her suffering. All that she could say was, "Blanche is better; we have nothing to fear." While she needed her care, Edith was unwearied, and long after Blanche was able to leave her room, she begged to be allowed to stay there.

"When will you go down?" asked Edith.

"Never, sister, if I had my choice," she replied. "Only let me shut myself up here."

After much persuasion, at the close of a week, Edith led her down stairs, pale, sad, and suffering. When she met Gerald, she extended her cold hand lifelessly, without raising her eyes, and, on answering his inquiries for her health, simply replied, "Better; but I cannot talk. Just let me lie on the sofa in the library."

They spent a quiet evening. All were under great restraint, for deep thoughts and solemn resolutions were agitating these suffering human hearts. Slowly Blanche recovered, but her spirits were gone. Even Adele's lively smiles ceased to cheer her. Edith read a great deal to her, from strengthening and encouraging books, and Madge endeavored to draw her away from herself, and frequently led her to Woodbine Cottage, hoping that the spirit of peace which abode there might reach her case.

In the meanwhile, fearful struggles were agitating the bosom of Edith Clifford. She had heard the wild burst of affection which, in a moment of alarm, had burst from the lips of Gerald Fortescue, and the tender epithets which, un-

consciously, had escaped from Blanche. She could blind herself no longer. Her idol was shattered. He whom she had loved so long, so devotedly, loved her no more, but loved another, and that one her own sister. Now, what was her duty? was the great question, night and day. It robbed her of rest, paled her cheeks, and interrupted her communion with heaven. Should she hold Gerald to his engagement, though he loved another? No, that must never be. Could she resign the dearest hope of her heart, for her sister? She felt her utter weakness, and could not summon strength to make the sacrifice. All the pride of her nature rose up, and she asked, what right had that sister to come and rob her of her heart's treasure? And yet, her secret conviction was, that it had not been the work of any deep design, but had been resisted by both; for she had seen their coldness, their avoiding of each other, and even rudeness on the part of Gerald. She spoke to no human being of her struggles, not even to Miss Arnold; but sure of divine sympathy and guidance, she went and told Jesus. He remembered whereof she was made, pitied her human infirmities, and with all the tenderness of an elder brother, at last made plain her path of duty, and, extending his hand to help, and his bosom to lean on, strengthened her to tread safely through this dark valley of her pilgrimage. On the top of the distant hill, which she was yet to climb, was waiting the "chamber of peace," from whose windows she might view the "land of Beulah," and yet go on her way rejoicing.

None could know all that was passing in the deep, fervent heart; a paler cheek, a loftier brow, a compressed lip, a more quiet step, and a deeper silence, betrayed some great conflict passed within, but none asked her of her trial, for most suspected what was wringing the noble heart. Ralph and Madge redoubled their affectionate attentions; Blanche was humble, quiet, loving; Adele restrained her merriment, and Miss Arnold clung more closely to her pupil. Edith visited her pastor more frequently, and found comfort in the councils of that valued friend, who, aware that some sore trial was agitating

her spirit, directed her to the only true source of wisdom and strength. Seated, one evening, in the drawing-room, near the side window, she heard foot-steps pacing slowly on the path, and soon discovered the voices to be those of Gerald and Blanche. The latter was speaking in reproachful tones of sorrow.

"Why do you treat me so unkindly, Gerald? what have I done?" said the young girl.

"Nothing, Blanche; I am not unkind, I do not mean to be," answered Gerald. "O, could you read my heart, how different would it appear!"

She advanced, and laid her hand upon his shoulder, while she raised her soft eyes to his face, and said, "Gerald you are to be my brother, treat me like a sister; do not speak so harshly, do not shun me, as if I were a serpent."

"O Blanche! do not tempt me to forget my duty. Treat you as a sister! O yes! that is an easy matter to talk about, but it wrings my heart to think of it."

"What do you mean, Gerald?" said Blanche, in her most winning manner.

"I mean, Blanche, that your loveliness has stolen away my honor, unconsciously. You have filled the heart that once was Edith's; and Blanche, I love you, as I have never loved before."

A smile of rapture stole over her young face, but it was instantly succeeded by a look of the deepest sadness, as she whispered, "Gerald, weak as I may appear, these few words have filled my heart with happiness, yet I cannot make my sister miserable. I know her devotion, I venerate her worth. I will go away, Gerald, and you will soon forget me, when united to such a lovely being as my sister Edith."

Stopping, and striking his forehead vehemently, he exclaimed, "What are we saying, Blanche? O, why did you come here? Go, Blanche, go at once; instantly leave me, and let us never meet again alone? We must forget each other? Honor, truth, duty, bid us both forget this dream!" So saying, he snatched the little hand, pressed it fervently to his lips,

and in an imploring tone said once more, "Blanche, begone! why do you stay? Leave me to myself!"

"Do not speak so unkindly, Gerald; it breaks my heart. Farewell! farewell!" and with these words, she turned sadly away, and hastened down the path that led to the shore, dropping, as she walked, a rose from the bosom of her dress. Gerald seized it, kissed it fervently, and placing it reverently in his vest pocket, said, "Farewell, too lovely Blanche! And now for the stern performance of duty." Edith had heard all, with her hand pressed upon her beating heart, which throbbed so wildly that she could almost hear its beating.

"Cruel, cruel Gerald! thus to despise the devotion of a life; but how could he help loving Blanche, when he draws comparison between the pale, drooping Edith, and the bright, lovely creature who has captivated him? I cannot wonder, then, there is more of sympathy between them than between us. The path of duty is opening before me, but oh, it is a bitter cross, and I am slow to take it up. Where is all my boasted pride now?" Rising slowly, she walked out upon the piazza, and there, on one of the settees, lay Gerald's portfolio, which in his haste he had forgotten. She opened it. There were numerous sketches of Blanche, in various attitudes, but the one which touched her the most, was the rough sketch, taken so many years ago, when, in the days of her childhood, he painted the picture on the balcony; doubtless from that hour began the study of the physical loveliness which had so wholly erased the noble image of Edith Clifford from the weak inconstant heart of Gerald Fortescue.

That was a sleepless night for Edith. Her memory went back to the first rosy dream of happiness, by the old elm tree; and when she realized all that she had suffered, thoughts of bitterness would spring up, and choke the effort to forgive the wrong. When Gerald next visited Ravenswood, his whole manner was changed. Icy cold to Blanche, he scarcely looked towards or spoke to her; to Edith he was studiously kind and attentive, but she was deceived no more.

In the evening Edith was seated alone in the library. The

door opened, and Gerald entered. Advancing towards her with the same smile as of former years, he approached, and said, "Edith, here are my gloves, will you not mend them for me?"

"Certainly, Gerald, it gives me pleasure to perform any service for you."

"Go, get your sewing utensils, and mend them here; will you not, Edith?"

She arose, and quickly returned with her work-basket.

"Shall I read while you sew?" said Gerald.

"I shall be glad to hear you," she replied, quietly.

As he read some of her favorite pieces, from Longfellow, she could not restrain the tears that would drop under her work, as she remembered the days that were gone, before the cloud rose up between them that had dimmed the happiness of their intercourse forever. She listened now, not to Gerald, her own beloved, but to Gerald, her sister's lover, and when she could obtain the strength to say it,—her sister's husband; for to this was she schooling her heart.

Blanche withered and pined away. Edith busied herself renewedly in works of benevolence. Ralph and Madge looked on in silent sympathy with the surrounding misery, and wondered where it all would end. Aware, however, of Edith's noble nature, they felt what was approaching, and dreaded the wreck of her fondly cherished hopes. Notwithstanding the silent sorrow of her sister Blanche, Edith still treated her with coldness, but to Gerald she was the tender woman still. So fervent was her devotion to him, that her pride seemed to forsake her when Gerald was concerned. She blamed Blanche unreasonably, and could not but think that she must have endeavored to draw him away from his allegiance.

They had been suffering so long that the whole household was affected, and Ralph proposed that if the day was favorable, on the morrow they should take an excursion on the Hudson as far as West Point.

Accordingly, the weather being propitious, the party started on their trip. Edith, Gerald, Blanche, Adele, and Madge,

composed the company. The day was charming, and the scenery exhilarating to the spirits of the young people; even Edith enjoyed it, but not with the keen delight of former years. Gerald was studiously kind and attentive to Edith, to Blanche distant and cold. Edith felt that this could not last much longer, and slowly she was preparing herself for the crucifixion of her hopes.

It was towards evening when they returned. Large numbers were on board the boat. Many seemed to be much excited, for a spirited race was going on between their boat and another, the gentlemen urging them on. Edith, observing how the men were heaping on wood, ventured to remonstrate; many of the ladies became alarmed, and Gerald, commissioned by several, went forward, and begged that they would cease.

"We are not going to lose our sport," said a dashing-looking man, "for a set of baby-faced women." "On with the steam," roared the racing company.

Perceiving that remonstrance was in vain, Edith endeavored to compose her own feelings and those of her sisters. Seated near the wheel-box, she said to Gerald, "Feel how intensely hot the deck is! I am sure that we are in danger." Touching it with his hand, his countenance expressed the apprehension that he felt. He hastened forward to the captain, begging him to examine the deck. He obeyed the summons, and looked alarmed. They watched his course, and saw him run rapidly down the stairs. In another minute, a cry of "Fire! fire!" was heard, and smoke was seen issuing from many of the cracks over the wheel-box. A scene of confusion, that baffled description, ensued. Shrieks, groans, and prayers for mercy, filled the air; and, in another minute, the flames burst through the deck, spreading rapidly towards the stern of the vessel. Mid groans and cries, the tolling of the bell added to the despair of the scene. Husbands were searching for their wives, parents for their children, brothers were calling loudly for their sisters, and our party, led by Gerald, hurried to the bow of the boat. The boats were instantly let down, but filled, in a moment, to overflowing. In the meanwhile, the tongues of flame leaped up,

consuming everything within their reach. Attempts were made to head the boat to the shore but the machinery was unmanageable, and the doomed company seemed devoted either to the devouring flames or to the swelling river. Seeing that destruction was inevitable, Gerald, in a moment of frantic agony, seized Blanche, exclaiming, in tones almost frenzied, "Blanche, my dearest love, we have suffered, let us be saved or die together."

Perceiving Blanche clinging closely around his neck, Edith drank another cup of bitter agony when she saw Gerald, her own betrothed, leap into the water with her sister, leaving her to such a dreadful fate. It needed but this to complete her misery. A tempting thought arose. "There is the deep water: it will drown all my sorrows; why should I live?" The sister's solemn vow recurred to her memory, and, quick as lightning, the mother's death-bed scene. "Forsake them, never!" was the sudden resolution, and the brave girl looked around for rescue for her sisters.

A gentleman hurried up to her. "There is a settee; jump, quickly," said he.

Hurrying Madge first, then Adele, to the side of the boat, she cried, "Go, go, dear sisters; let me only see you safe: jump on to the settee, a boat is near," and the noble girl stood there, the picture of heroic resolution, nor ever thought of herself, though the flames were singeing her hair, until she saw them safe from the burning wreck.

"Now, young lady," said the same gentleman, "there is another settee; spring quickly, and I will accompany you;" she made the plunge, but the settee floated away, and, for a moment, she was struggling in the water. The arm of her unknown friend held her up, and he swam with her to the boat, begging her to hold on to the rope, until he brought back the settee. The flames were rapidly spreading to the bow of the boat; toll, toll, rang the bell. Edith felt that the rope was on fire. Moments seemed ages. The fire reached her hand. Battered with the flame, she dropped, and was caught in the arms of her preserver, who had returned with a settee.

Placing her on it, he held her up—for she was nearly fainting—when he saw a boat pushing rapidly off from the shore. Making quick signals of distress, he attracted their attention. It drew near, and in a short time Edith was safely placed in the boat, her hands and the back of her neck sorely burned, in her heroic efforts to save her sisters.

“Let us go in search of the settees; my sisters are on one,” said Edith. Perceiving one not many yards distant, they drew up to the frail support, but her sisters were not there; all were strangers. “Row on, row on,” exclaimed Edith, wringing her hands in agony. So intense was her excitement that she scarcely perceived the bodies, burnt and drowning, that floated around her.

In a few minutes more they reached another settee, and, supported by Madge, lay her sister Adele, pale and lifeless. Lifting them quickly into the boat, the sisters were locked in each other’s arms, while tears of joy bathed the pale faces that looked upon each other in speechless love, as almost raised from the dead.

Rowing to the shore, Edith’s preserver conveyed the party to the nearest house, where they received all the attention they needed. Mr. Percival—for that was the gentleman’s name—inquired where they would be conveyed. On being informed that they were about twelve miles from their home, he obtained a carriage from the kind family, and after changing their dresses for dry garments, they started for their homes, filled with anxiety for the fate of Gerald and Blanche.

As Edith turned away from the scene of the disaster, she gave one hurried glance to the boat, and saw not only the burning hull, but, upon that placid summer stream, the wreck of all her earthly hopes of happiness: for the echoes of Gerald’s tones of agony were still ringing in her ears, and calling upon her loudly for sacrifice. Burned in upon her heart, the remembrance of that scene was stamped there forever.

They reached home about midnight. The family were all up, waiting for tidings from the rest of the party, for Gerald and Blanche had arrived first. When the carriage drove up

Mr. Clifford received them with speechless joy, and Edith's first cry was for Gerald and Blanche. "They are safe," answered the father; "they arrived about one hour ago, and Blanche is in charge of Miss Arnold."

Edith nerved herself to go into her sister's room. When Blanche saw her, she threw herself into her arms, and whispered, "Thank God, my sister, we are all safe." Unable longer to restrain her feelings, Edith hurried to her own room.

Miss Arnold saw that all were properly attended to after so great a shock, but was particularly alarmed by the marble skin and deathlike appearance of her beloved Edith. Her answers were incoherent,—scarcely seeming aware of all that had happened; she appeared like one wholly benumbed. A warm bath, blankets, and a stimulating beverage were administered, and on being assured that she felt better, Miss Arnold, at Edith's urgent request, left her alone.

And now, alone with God, deep were the struggles of that night of agony. She recalled all the days of her early love, all the trust and confidence which she had reposed in Gerald, all the love which she had lavished upon her sister, and bitterly she asked, why she had been called to bear so much? Her spirit rose up in rebellion against Gerald, against Blanche, and even, for a moment, against God, accusing him of injustice; but with the strong shield of faith she repelled the Satanic dart. Then recurred the remembrance of the sister's vow by the mother's death-bed; the misery of two suffering hearts, both weaker than herself; and, with a strong heart, nerved by fervent, earnest prayer, she resolved to release Gerald, and to devote herself wholly, renewedly, to God and her family. With Edith Clifford, to resolve was to do. The long struggle was over, the tempest of feeling subsided; the dove of peace folded her bright wings over her pillow, and towards morning Edith slept. When she awoke, she found herself very weak, but having high duties to perform that day, she arose, dressed slowly, and fortifying her soul from the great trial by fervent prayer, she descended to the breakfast-room.

As she entered, she advanced to her father, and kissed him

fondly ; but there was a look of intense suffering about the marble face, and a subdued tone of feeling in her voice, that impressed all who looked upon her. Miss Arnold, who understood her beloved pupil's character, read the expression of high resolve aright, and understood the melting of her soft, dark eye as she looked on Gerald and Blanche, while occasionally a tender smile played around her sweet lips. Gerald scarcely raised his eyes, conscious of his cruel desertion, but Edith advanced and whispered, "It is all forgiven, Gerald. Poor Gerald, you could not help it."

He could not answer, but he took the pale hand, pressed it to his lips, and rushed from the room. It was a quiet meal, for all were too deeply agitated to converse much. Mr. Clifford and Miss Arnold alone endeavored to entertain their kind guest, Mr. Percival, whom they found to be a very intelligent man. Aged about thirty, his fine face expressed a lofty character, and he soon declared himself to be a missionary, preparing for labors in China. His conversation was deeply interesting, and under other circumstances he would have been a welcome guest. Evidently much pleased with his new acquaintances, he resolved to take advantage of the cordial invitation of Mr. Clifford to visit Ravenswood frequently.

After breakfast, Edith sent for Gerald to meet her in the library. He entered with a bowed head and timid step. She was seated on her mother's chair. Having passed through all her fearful struggles, a smile of tenderness played around the usually proud lips, the eyes expressed high resolve and melting pity ; her whole aspect was serene and dignified.

"Sit down, Gerald, I have much to say," said the noble woman. "I have sent for you, Gerald, to release you from all bonds to me. I have been long of the opinion that your warmest love is another's ; and the incidents of last evening have convinced me that I ought not to hold you longer bound." Gerald bowed his head, covered with his hands, upon the table. Edith spoke with difficulty, gasping between every sentence. "It has been a bitter trial, Gerald, for the affection of many years, or rather of a whole life, is not easily conquered : but I

desire, above all things, to see you happy. You love my sister Blanche, and I do not wonder. She is a charming girl, and loves you fondly. I can bid you take her, Gerald, and may God bless you both."

Gerald's frame shook with the tempest of feeling that agitated him. Raising his head, he said, "O Edith Clifford! your noble heart is worthy of a better man than I; but believe me, Edith, I have never wronged you wilfully. My reason has always approved of my early choice, but my imagination, my feelings, have been led away unconsciously. I have avoided Blanche, I have treated her coldly, yes, even harshly; but I have been bewildered by her fascinating beauty and her grace. But when I think of last night, and how I left you, my noble Edith, to perish, I despise myself for my weakness."

"You could not help it, Gerald; you forgot poor Edith," and her lips quivered with suppressed emotion, while she laid her hand upon his burning forehead. "You betrayed, unconsciously, the depth of your love; and though I wished to perish too in that moment, I resolved that, should your lives be spared, I would not separate two hearts that loved each other."

"Have I not always said, Edith, that you were far above me, as heaven is above the earth? And now you seem towering above common humanity, and akin to angels."

"I am redeeming my vow to my dying mother, Gerald, and after the bitterness of sacrifice is all over, peace will come, and I shall be happy if you and Blanche are only blest. Go, bring Blanche here. I must see her at once."

In a few minutes Blanche entered the library. With a timid step she advanced to her sister, who, taking Gerald's hand and joining it with that of Blanche, raised her eyes to heaven, and placing a hand on each head, said, slowly, in solemn tones, "God bless my—my—brother and sister. May they tread life's pilgrimage happily together, and at last may we all meet in our father's heavenly kingdom." Then taking the ring of betrothal from her finger, and placing it upon her sister's, she added, "Blanche, be faithful to Gerald, comfort, sustain, and cheer him, and may God bless you both."

Blanche, bowed at her sister's feet, said, "Edith, sister, forgive me; I have not wronged you willingly. My poor, weak heart is not so strong as yours. I have struggled, but in vain. O, let me go, Edith, away, far away from Ravenswood, and Gerald will forget that there was ever such a being as Blanche Clifford."

"Arise, my child, my dear sister; my resolution is fixed. You must be a kind, affectionate companion to Gerald, and I will be your friend, your sister, still."

"Edith, you make me ashamed of myself. How can I take advantage of your generosity?" answered Blanche.

"May you both be happy," whispered Edith, hoarsely, whose strength was rapidly failing. Gerald supported her to the door of her own room, and pressing her hand reverently to his lips, he returned to Blanche, who, weeping, was sitting on the couch where he had left her. We will not disclose the communion of that hour, but will simply add, that its happiness was much diminished by the remembrance of the sacrifice which had bound them together.

When Edith reached her room, throwing herself upon her knees, the fountain of her tears gushed forth, and she paid the last tribute of farewell to all her youthful dreams of earthly happiness. Unable to sit up, she retired to her bed, and when missed at the dinner-table, Miss Arnold hastened to her room, and found her in a burning fever. The excitement of the night before, and the events of the succeeding day, had been too much for her. The last solemn duty performed, she had sunk beneath the burden. In a few words, Miss Arnold was apprised of all, and on the bosom of that faithful friend, the lacerated heart found sympathy and comfort. For weeks, she lay in a low, nervous fever. The anxious father, the distressed, agonized sisters, Frank and Eveleen, the praying pastor, suffering Gerald, the weeping servants, good old Aunt Priscilla, the poor, the ignorant, who thronged the house, all testified to the deep and reverential love which Edith had inspired. But when she came among them once more, serene and placid, a great change had passed over that lofty spirit; the tomb had

closed over her early love; and but few knew why Edith's teachings were so much more spiritual, Edith's prayers among the sick and suffering so much more heavenly, and her ministry among her household so loving, so forbearing, so humble; none knew but her own family, who, henceforth, almost enshrined her as their guardian angel, upon earth. Nothing could exceed Aunt Priscilla's indignation when apprised of Edith's noble sacrifice.

"I always said that Gerald was not worthy of our Edith; now, you see, my words have all come true. Blanche, with her baby face and winnin' ways has stolen his heart away from Edith. I don't kere about it, but it vexes my old heart to see her pinin' away, after sich a weak, worthless feller. He's jist fit for Blanche; they're well matched, say I; but I'll take good kere of Edith; she'll never want a friend, while I'm living."

In a week from this time, the old lady was seen driving off in her crazy gig, but leaving her pets behind, they looked for her return. In the course of a few days, the old vehicle was seen driving up the avenue, and so soon as convenient, the old lady summoned Edith to her room. Handing her a package, tied with pink tape, she said, "There, my child, is a deed, which makes Hazel Glen your own. It is a fine old place, and a fine old house. You deserve it, Edith; and if any trouble should come on you here, there's a home for life, and if not, the rent will be a snug little income."

"O, aunty, you are a good friend," replied Edith; "I thank you for your kindness."

"I have never forgot all your goodness to the plain old country woman," said Aunt Priscilla, "so different from your father's friends. I've seed your sore trouble, I know all your trials; but the good Lord, Edey, will never forsake one that trusts in him. You'll never forgit your old aunty; when she's sick, and ready to pass over Jordan, you'll come, won't you, Edey, and wipe the death-sweat from my face, and sing your sweet hymns, around my dyin' pillar?"

"That I will, if my life is spared, aunty; you may rely always upon me."

Taking Edith in her arms the kind old woman kissed her affectionately, and said, "You are a good child, Edey, and your last days will be blessed, that I know."

Ralph and Madge felt still more closely bound to the noble woman, for though but little was said about her trials, they were fully aware of all, and honored her for the sacrifice.

Old Uncle Peter saw that something unusual had occurred. "I'll tell you what it is, nurse," said the old man, "I'm sore afraid that Miss Edith is gwane to leave us; she looks more and more like an angel, every day. Ever sence she's been sick, I've seed that look on her face. The proud curl around her mouth is all gone; and then her words are all so kind, and she seems to love everybody so much. Mark my words, she's had some sore trouble, but jest like some of our yarbs in the garden, which are sweeter when they're crushed, they've been a blessing to her."

"I think so too, Uncle Peter," said the nurse; "I've heard her cry in the night so pitifully, when she was sick, and I think I know what's the matter with my darling. You know, for many years, ever since she was seventeen, she has been engaged to Master Gerald; but lately, I see he doesn't walk about with Miss Edith, as he used to, but he's always with Miss Blanche. The other day Miss Edith was sitting at her chamber window, when Mr. Gerald and Miss Blanche passed by; they didn't see her; but Miss Blanche had some flowers in her hair, and Mr. Gerald took one out, and kissed it, and then put it in the button-hole of his coat. Miss Blanche smiled and blushed, as if she was pleased, and there was a look upon their young faces that said they loved each other. I was in Miss Edith's room, and I saw her press her hand upon her heart, and look upon them with such a sad, sweet smile, that I know all the history of her trouble now."

Uncle Peter wiped away a tear, as he said, "Bless her dear young heart! Miss Blanche, with her beautiful face and winnin' ways, isn't fit to hold a candle to Miss Edith. But the world 'll be all the better for Miss Edith's sorrow, if she is to be an old maid. I speck that's the reason why she's doin' so much

good. The love that's been thrown away upon Massa Gerald is shinin' now among the poor and the sufferin'. I tell you, nurse, sometimes I feel as if I could go right down on my old knees, and worship her."

One duty yet remained. Locked in her room, she proceeded to disinter the relics of her buried affection, ere consigning them forever to oblivion. Gerald's likeness, in the early days of their engagement, with its dreaming eyes, high forehead, and soft, waving brown hair; a pin with his hair, a gift when they left Europe; several casts, and some gems of his own painting, and a large package of letters, which she dare not read,—all were gathered together, and returned, with a request that the latter might be burned, and her own restored to her. The letters came, but the little gifts which had been exchanged, he begged to retain as mementoes of a sister's love. Gathering the letters, she placed them one by one, in the fire, and as they were consumed, shed some natural tears over their smouldering ashes, repeating these beautiful lines:

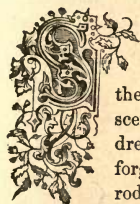
"Have I not been nigh a mother
To thy sweetness—tell me, dear?
Have we not loved one another
Tenderly, from year to year?
Since our dying mother mild,
Said, with accents undefiled,
'Child, be mother to this child!'

"Mother, mother, up in heaven,
Stand upon the jasper sea,
And be witness I have given
All the gifts required of me,
Hope that blessed me, bliss that crowned,
Love that left me with a wound,
Life itself that turned around?"



CHAPTER XXIV.

GREEN PASTURES AND STILL WATERS.



SOMETIMES, through the deep valleys of sorrow, at others, up the rough hill-sides of difficulty, the pilgrim passes on his journey to the skies; sometimes, too much fascinated by scenes of earth, or lulled to sleep by the sweet dreams of some enchanted bower, he is tempted to forget his heavenly crown: then comes the friendly rod, striking the sleeping pilgrim, with the command to "march, march forward," awaking him from his slumbers. Called, perhaps, to encounter some fierce enemy who assails his soul, he girds himself for the conflict; conquering in strength of his Redeemer, he reaches the height of some distant hill, where the "chamber of peace," the "bread of heaven," and the "water of life," are ready for his refreshment. Such a resting-place had Edith reached; and having conquered her spiritual enemies, blessed were the visions of rest, beyond this world of conflict and temptation, which visited her in that peaceful chamber.

Coming daily among her family from this holy refuge, her countenance shone with the blessedness of such communion. Under the elevation of her feelings, she could almost look upon the happiness which she had conferred upon Gerald and Blanche with composure, and doubted not that hereafter she should fully understand the wisdom which had blasted her

early hopes. Perhaps, like the young eagle, she would not have left her peaceful nest to plume her wings for heaven, but her Heavenly Father had stirred up her nest, and, like the parent bird who flutters over her tender nurslings to compel their flight, her heavenly Friend had taken her, and bearing her on his outstretched wings, had aided her upward flight. The love which now encircled her in her own home, was a sweet cordial, and the unfailing friendship of Miss Arnold, a blessing of no common character. Little Emily was now her sole charge. Lilly was improving rapidly, and her letters breathed a tone of piety and contentment with her earthly lot. On all holiday occasions, she came to Ravenswood, and enjoyed her visits with much delight. Possessing fine musical talents, they were highly cultivated, and afforded her friends great gratification on her visits home. But Edith's fears were deeply awakened for her beloved brother. His strength seemed gradually declining, his preaching more and more spiritual; and Edith listened to his eloquent appeals with a beating heart, for the hacking cough, the hollow cheeks, the hectic flush, all told her that his days were numbered. She knew these symptoms too well, for she had watched them all in her beloved mother.

One morning, Cæsar was brought up to the door of the cottage, and little Frank was to accompany his father on his morning ride. He had just given the parting kiss to Eveleen, and was lifting his little boy on to the saddle, when his anxious wife observed him place his handkerchief hastily to his mouth, while unusual paleness spread over his face. He mounted and had scarcely seated himself, ere the crimson tide gushed from his mouth. With one desperate effort he lifted his boy from the horse, and dismounted, leaning upon Eveleen's shoulder for support. Her cries soon brought assistance, and with the help of a servant, they conveyed him into the parlor and laid him on the sofa. Placing his head low, and administering salt and water, she sent instantly for Dr. Randolph and for Edith.

In a short time the physician arrived. He ordered perfect quietness, and pronounced the case very dangerous. Eveleen exerted all her powers of self-control, and waited anxiously for

Edith. The sound of carriage-wheels indicated her approach. Eveleen hastened to the gate. One gush of feeling was allowed, as the two sisters were, for one moment, folded in each other's arms, and then quietly proceeded to the side of the couch. The hemorrhage had subsided for the present, but the physician bade them look for a return. Frank extended his hand to Edith, smiled sweetly, drew her down close to him, and kissed her fondly.

"Not a word, dear Frank," said the sister, "quietness is the order of the day; when you are better you can say all you wish." Closely they kept watch by the side of the sufferer. In the middle of the day, another hemorrhage, more severe than the first, seemed as though it might drain the very fountain of life, and towards evening, a third produced such weakness, that scarcely any pulse was left.

For hours he lay pale as the sheeted dead. No sign of life, save a faint fluttering of the pulse, and an irregular motion of the heart, was seen. Woman's love and woman's trust sustained the watchers. Hour after hour passed away, and no change appeared. The stars shone brightly upon the little cottage; and Edith, as she looked out, saw what Emily had always called her mother's star, and she almost wondered if spirits, in the world of bliss, had any sympathy with the sorrows of this lower world. She blessed God that revelation had taught her where to look for sympathy, not human, but divine; and to that tender, loving Saviour, "who sticketh closer than a brother," she told her tale of sorrow, and prayed for strength to bear it all. Pale, silent sufferers in that sick chamber, to you might well be addressed the words of the sweet poetess:

"Her lot is on you! to be found untired,
Watching the stars out by the bed of pain,
With a pale cheek, and yet a brow inspired,
And a true heart of hope, though hope be vain.
Meekly to bear with wrong, to cheer decay
And oh! to love through all things,—therefore pray!"

Night passed away. No sleep had visited the eyes of either,

but towards morning they observed that Frank was sleeping. A slight improvement was apparent: the bleeding had entirely ceased, and a more healthy state of the skin was visible. Eveleen smiled, as she looked on Edith, and whispered, "Is he not better?"

"He appears so, dear, but do not let us be too sanguine; we will wait until the doctor comes; but Evey, you must take some refreshment," and leaving the room, Edith soon returned with a cup of tea, a slice of toast, and a soft egg, for the worn-out watcher, and stood by while she saw her partake of some.

When Dr. Randolph arrived, his countenance expressed encouragement. He said that if no other change took place, he might be removed to his chamber, in the evening. Gradually he seemed to rally, and after tea, Mr. Clifford and Uncle Peter carried him to his own room, the old servant wiping a tear from his eye as he felt how light was the burden which he laid upon the bed. Another night's refreshing sleep found him still more improved, and the next morning, when Eveleen had left the room, Frank beckoned Edith to his side, and said, "Lean down close, sister, I have been on the borders of eternity, and I had no fears, Edith. All was bright, for my Saviour was with me."

"Do not talk too much, dear Frank," replied his sister; "quiet is very necessary."

"It does not hurt me now, dear, for I am not agitated; no, Edith, deep, perfect peace reigns here," placing his pale hand upon his heart. "When you thought me sleeping, Edith, my heart was filled with love to you, to Eveleen, to the whole world; but it was ready to leave all, to be with my Saviour."

Fearing the excitement of any more conversation, Edith laid her hand on Frank's mouth, and smiling, took her seat at a distant window. Leaving the room, she sent Eveleen to her husband, telling her of their conversation.

With a smile, full of love, he folded his wife in his arms, and whispered, "Bless you, Eveleen, for all your love to your sick husband; what a ministering angel you have been!"

Passing her hand carressingly through his dark curls, she

pressed a kiss upon his pale lips, and replied, "God has been very good, dearest; he has heard our prayers: you will be raised again."

"It may be, dear, but should it be so, mine will be a shattered frame; and I fear, Evey, that I shall always be a burden to those I love."

"Do not say so, Frank; it is never a task to minister to my husband. I am never tired, dear, if I can only make you more comfortable."

From that day, he began to amend; in a few weeks, was able to walk about; but the physician gave no hopes of final recovery. During the summer, he frequently rode out, visited Ravenswood daily, when the weather was fine; but he felt that the sentence had gone forth, and was putting his house in order, to be ready for the summons.

Mr. Berkely saw that he must part with his beloved colleague, and as gently as he could do so, dropped hints to Edith of the real state of the case.

With the dropping of the autumn leaves, unfavorable symptoms returned: the cough became more troublesome; night-sweats commenced; strength and appetite declined daily. As winter approached, he could leave the house no more. The keen blasts penetrated the little cottage, and shook his drooping frame, that was now bending to the tomb. Ralph was constant in his visits to the sick man, and many hours of sweet and holy communion did these young men spend together. Gerald came also, but not so frequently, for the sight of sickness and death was not welcome to one who was yet so far astray from God.

Eveleen was the same devoted, cheerful wife; for although her heart was often bursting, she would not let her husband see her anguish, and when overcharged with too much sorrow, she would fly, for a few minutes, to her room, and on her knees, before God, would pray for strength, returning to her husband with a smile upon her face. None knew, but her Redeemer, how severe were these conflicts. At last, unable to leave his bed, Eveleen daily read to him from the Words of God, and such hymns as he selected for his favorites. Mr. Berkely

whispered words of unspeakable comfort. Edith, with her strong faith, hovered daily around his dying couch, and Ralph and Madge were sweet sympathizers.

Little Frank was much in his father's room, and lying often on the bed by his side. He received many a sweet lesson, even at this early age, from his dying parent. When Eveleen was sometimes compelled to leave the room, she would say, "Franky, do you see that tumbler? When papa wants a drink, hand it to him, dear," and the little fellow would watch, carefully attending to his father's wants.

"Papa, shall I hand you 'Daily Food?'" (alluding to a little book, which he saw his father frequently read). "Papa, shall I sing a little hymn?"

"Yes, my son;" and the sweet child would lisp out,—

"There is a happy land,
Far, far away,
Where saints and glory stand,
Bright, bright as day.
Oh, we shall happy be,
When, from sin and sorrow free,
Lord, we shall dwell with Thee,
Blest, blest for aye."

"Is not that a pretty hymn, papa? Mamma taught it to me. Now, papa, shall I bring you some nice cologne?" and, running to the bureau, the little fellow would get the bottle, and climbing up to the side of the bed would bathe his father's head, put some on his handkerchief, and holding it to his nose, he would kiss him affectionately, and patting his face, would say, "Now, papa, you are tired; let us go to sleep;" and throwing his arms around his father, Eveleen would often find him thus fondly ministering to his comfort.

Winter wore gradually away. With the advent of the snowdrop and the crocus, the last symptoms of consumption appeared. Mrs. Austin was summoned, and Eveleen convinced now that she soon must resign her beloved companion, sent for Edith to come quickly.

When she arrived, Eveleen threw herself upon her sister's

bosom, and exclaimed, "Sister, it cannot be much longer. Perhaps Frank has something to say, some particular request to make; should he not know how short his time may be? I cannot tell him, sister,—will you?"

"I will endeavor to do as you request, Evey. I think that he ought to know the truth."

Edith entered his room. He lay, the picture of weakness. His wasted features and pallid face; his hollow cheeks and tender, beseeching eyes, so different from the bright, dancing orbs, which once illumined his face all deeply affected his sister's heart. She took her seat by his side, and taking the cold, clammy hand in her own, she kissed it fervently; then, pressing her own hand upon the cold forehead, where the dews of consumption lay, in drops as large as peas, moistening the damp hair, she whispered, "Frank, you are very weak, dear; none but Jesus can help you now."

"Yes, dear sister," replied he, while his lips quivered with suppressed feeling, "none but Jesus, now; but he never leaves me, Edith."

"Are you aware, dearest, that his messenger is very near, even at your door? Have you anything to say? any request to make?"

"I have wished to live, sister, for Eveleen and Frank's sake; it requires a strong faith to leave such dear objects. Sometimes my heart yearns to be spared, for their sakes; but God's holy will be done. For the future, my hopes are full of glory. But, Edith, you will be a sister to my Eveleen; you will comfort, cheer, sustain her, and should she be taken from my boy, you will be a mother to our child; will you not, Edith?" Tears were streaming down the pale face, as he made this tender appeal.

"I will, my brother; you need not fear," replied Edith; "I shall love him, for my brother's sake."

"Now, sister, on this death-bed, let me thank you for all your care, your unfailing love to your brother. To you, my noble sister, I owe all: all my hopes of heaven, all my happiness on earth, all the piece of this blessed moment. Here sister,

behold some of the recompense for all your self-denying love; it is but a small foretaste of what you shall reap in heaven."

Edith leaned her head upon her hands and wept, but they were tears of mingled joy and sorrow. "Edith," he continued, "you have had bitter trials, but remember, dear, 'the Lord loveth whom he chasteneth;' 'sorrow may endure for a night, but joy ariseth in the morning,' and 'all things shall work together for good, to them that love God.' You are in the hands of a good, a wise, and gracious God, who will not suffer you to be tempted more than you are able to bear. Now, one more request I have to make: I must be reconciled to Mr. Austin, and I must see my father and my sister before I die."

Bending down by her brother's side, Edith offered up a heartfelt, fervent prayer for him, and, as she arose, he drew her down once more, saying, "God bless you, Edith, forever and forever!"

A message was despatched to Mr. Austin, who, willing to lay aside all his old resentment, hastened to the dying chamber, and assuring Frank of full forgiveness, he was at peace. He was greatly attracted by his little grandson, and promised Frank to be a faithful friend, when he was laid in the silent tomb.

Mr. Clifford, whose heart was wrapped up in Frank, was prostrated at the thoughts of losing his only son, and spent most of his time at the cottage, watching the departure of the beloved one, and endeavoring, by the supply of every want, to soothe the last hours of his idol. Sending for him to his room, Frank addressed him, solemnly, on this subject of preparation for another world, saying, "Dear father, may I hope to meet you in heaven? Our mother is there. She waits for us. God is calling us home, one by one. Let us not be separated on the last great day." Mr. Clifford was deeply affected, and promised his son to attend to the concerns of the never-dying soul.

Blanche and Adele received his dying counsels with deep feeling. Blanche, especially, seemed most impressed. His appeal to Gerald, to remember his Christian vows, was most faithful and impressive. His message to the people of his

charge was full of the yearnings of a faithful minister. A few more days, and the last messenger arrived. Asking to be left alone with Eveleen, he addressed her tenderly. "Evey, my love, the Master has come. He wants me in another world. My work is done here, and I must leave my sweet wife. You have been a faithful, devoted companion, and have made my life very dear to me. It was hard to give you and Franky up; but it is done, dearest, and now I commit you to our own Saviour. He will comfort you. Edith will be a tender sister. Bring up our child for God, and meet me, dearest, where we shall part no more."

Almost overwhelmed, the young wife bent over her beloved companion, and kissing him, said "God's holy will be done. A few short years, perhaps months, dear husband, and we shall meet again. It will not be long, Frank, for I cannot live without my husband. You are a part of myself."

"Send for Mr. Berkely, Evey. I must see him once more."

Anxious to fulfil every request, she despatched a messenger for the pastor, who was quickly at his side. With words of holy comfort, he soothed the dying man, repeating promise after promise. The holy countenance of the departing Christian expressed all the support which they afforded. Slowly life departed; and in the presence of his afflicted family, sustained and cheered by the blessed hopes of immortality, the spirit of Frank Clifford took its flight for another and better world. Three short years of ministerial labor had completed his mission upon earth; but, if measured by its results, he had done a great work, in a short period, bringing many souls, reclaimed from the error of their ways, home to holiness and heaven. The need for exertion having passed away, Eveleen sank under the weight of the blow. For hours she would sit, silently gazing upon the soft dark curls, which she had removed ere the remains of her husband were laid in the tomb. Edith exerted all her powers to arouse her, but she feared that it was a crushed and broken heart that resisted all her efforts.

By Mr. Clifford's request, the remains were removed to his father's home, to be interred from thence; and when, in the

evening, Edith observed the hearse approaching with the sacred relics, she could not but recall the image of the bright, blooming, mischievous boy that made the house ring with his peals of merriment; the sanguine, enthusiastic youth; the meek and lowly minister of the Lord Jesus; and looking upon the coffin which contained all that was mortal of her beloved brother, she could but ask, mournfully, "And is this all that is left of my dearest brother? But I must not weep as one who sorrows without hope, for my brother sleeps in Jesus."

The remains were conveyed, solemnly, to the library amid the train of weeping servants, who stood in the entry, watching their last reception in the halls of Ravenswood. Previous to interment, many were the humble parishioners who wept around all that was left of their young minister; and on the day of the funeral, throngs of the neighboring inhabitants, numbers of his former gay companions, and many of the clergy from New York, testified to the deep respect entertained for the deceased. The services were conducted by the Rev. Mr. Berkely, and others, and, by the side of his mother, the remains of Frank Clifford repose, until the resurrection morn.

After the return of the funeral procession, Edith, folding Eveleen in her arms, said, "You are mine, Evey, now. Frank requested that you might come to me, and I know father will need his little grandson."

"My parents want me, Edith, to come to New York; but I could not bear the bustle of that city, and I wish my boy brought up in the country. Its quiet soothes my spirits, and here I can better prepare for heaven."

At Eveleen's earnest request, her parents consented for her to remain at Ravenswood; but with the promise that, so soon as she could, she would visit them, with her little boy.

During all these trials, Edith felt that she was walking beside "the green pastures and still waters" of salvation. The ordinances of the Gospel were still more refreshing, her Bible more precious, her seasons of communion more holy. Not for one moment did she feel forsaken; but, assured of her brother's blessedness, and of her own interest in glorious hopes of the

Gospel, she maintained a holy, peaceful walk with God. All the affections of her heart were drawn towards Eveleen, who, though resigned, felt that her spirit was crushed, and her health broken; and though she experienced "the peace that passeth all understanding," her heart yearned for the beloved one, now sleeping in the silent grave. Edith took upon herself the task of removing all the furniture necessary for Eveleen's room, from the cottage, and also of preparing for the sale.

The day before it took place, Eveleen, laying her head upon Edith's shoulder, whispered, "Take me once more to the cottage. I must see it again." And, driving slowly and sadly to the sweet home, Edith granted her request. Entering the little parlor, Eveleen laid her mourning bonnet and veil down upon the table, and sitting on the sofa, clad in her widow's weeds, looked around upon all the familiar objects with an expression of soul-stirring grief.

"Edith, it was a little paradise. I do not believe that there ever was a more happy pair. Not one jarring word ever passed between us. Frank was always so kind, so tender. O Edith! how can I live without my husband?"

Taking her in her arms, Edith smoothed the bands of soft, light hair, that lay folded beneath her widow's cap, and, as she looked upon her delicate loveliness, and saw the blue veins coursing beneath the transparent skin, the inward conviction pressed upon her that she would not long be left behind. Walking through every room, she lingered longest in the library. Returning to the parlor, she replaced her bonnet and veil, gathered a few fresh spring flowers, and casting one more longing, lingering look behind, with a slow step she returned to the carriage, and, folded in Edith's arms, returned to Ravenswood.

Frank's death had been a severe blow to his father, for he had built many hopes upon his only son. Under the influence of grief, his step failed, his spirits sank, and many alarming symptoms appeared. So soon as he was seated, he was asleep, spoke seldom to any one, and spent much more time alone. Even little Frank, with his merry, sprightly sports, did not

interest him; and the family physician recommended great watchfulness, as he feared paralysis.

One day he was unusually late in his appearance, and Edith, going to his room, found him unable to rise, and on approaching observed that he was entirely insensible. Sending for the physician, it was pronounced, as they all feared, an attack of paralysis. For several days there seemed no amendment, but at the close of a week, he rallied somewhat. At the close of the third, his speech returned, and there was a prospect of recovery. Edith was unwearied in her attentions, but assisted by Madge, her labors were much relieved, although her father was never happy when she was absent; consequently, she spent much of her time in his room. When he was sufficiently recovered, he was taken down stairs, and being unable to walk, was wheeled about on the piazza. His whole aspect seemed changed. Child-like and docile, he loved to talk about Frank, and was never tired of listening to Eveleen's account of his goodness, his preaching, his labors, and his dying words. For whole hours would he listen to the same story, while tears streamed down his face. The strength of Mr. Clifford's mind was gone, but the humility and gentleness of one under the drawings of the Holy Spirit, were daily more apparent. His memory was much impaired, and often he imagined those who had been dead for years were here yesterday, and could take no account of time.

"Evey, did you know my wife? She came to see me last night. She told me to follow Frank, and I mean to do it, Evey. I have not always loved God, but I love him now; I love to think about him, and to pray to him. Do you love God, Evey?" These marks of the weakness of his intellect deeply affected his daughter Edith, and she bestowed upon him all the watchful care that she would have done upon a feeble child. His health improved rapidly, but the mind seemed gone, beyond the power of recovery. He had now no ability to attend to the business of his large farm, and Edith had to depend upon Gerald for advice and assistance. The familiar intercourse which this made necessary was beneficial to both

and gradually the reserve which had existed began to wear away.

But she was soon convinced that it would be impossible to remain at Ravenswood, for the place was much too large for a woman's care, and as Gerald was only with them once a week, the responsibilities were too heavy. She dreaded the effect of removal upon her father's mind, and delayed the step on that account. Blanche had continued to manifest much more interest in the things of God since the death of her brother, and acting upon hasty impulses, she begged permission to be received into the church, on next season of confirmation. Mr. Berkely kept her for some time in a state of probation; but when she still manifested the same desire, and exhibited many marks of a changed nature, he no longer refused her. Edith, with all a sister's faithfulness, laid before her all that would be expected of her; and even Gerald, aware of his own defection, did not greatly encourage her; but on the day appointed, Blanche was among the company confirmed, and manifested much tenderness of feeling on the solemn occasion.

"And now none are left, who are old enough, but I," said Adele; "why am I so indifferent? But I am not indifferent. I must be really changed, before I take such a solemn step. I am afraid that Blanche will go back again to the world, she is so inconstant; and I am resolved never to profess to be a Christian, unless I am sure that it is so." But Adele had many serious thoughts, and Edith hoped more for her than for Blanche.

Christmas came again, but it was a sad season at Ravenswood: it brought together the family circle, but the mother was not there, Frank was no more among them, and Mr. Clifford was but a wreck of what he had been. Lilly, Emily, and little Frank, enjoyed the presents, for childhood's griefs soon give way to childhood's joys. Looking around among his children, Mr. Clifford said, sadly, "Christmas can never be a happy time again; my Mary, my Frank, are here no more, and I am getting to be a weak, old man. Edith, come here, Edith; let me lean on you, while I try to walk." Able now to leave his chair, he could walk with the aid of a crutch

and Edith's arm. "Edith, do you ever get tired of waiting on your old father?"

"Never, father; it is always a pleasure to give you comfort."

Patting her fondly on the cheek, he said, "You are a good child, Edith; God will bless you, dear."

Convinced now that they must leave Ravenswood, Edith prepared to remove to Hazel Glen, but was much perplexed as to the best way of informing her father. Thinking it best to pay a visit there first, she proposed a ride,—taking her father, Eveleen, and little Frank. The distance was ten miles from Ravenswood, and they expected to spend the day. Their road lay through a very picturesque country. Little Frank was full of delight. Mr. Clifford enjoyed the ride; but nothing could move Eveleen, whose thoughts were always with the sainted dead. When arriving in sight of Hazel Glen, Edith was greatly charmed by the rural beauty of her new home. It was an old-fashioned mansion, with a piazza all around, situated in the midst of a woody dell. There was a fine garden attached to the place, laid out in winding paths, and the piazza was embowered in creeping roses, clematis, and jessamine. Behind the house was a range of lofty hills, stretching away in the distance. All that she regretted was that she could see the noble Hudson no more, excepting a distant view from the lofty hills. When they drove up to the door, they were received, respectfully, by John Holland and his wife, who had charge of the farm.

"How do you do, ma'am? You are welcome to Hazel Glen. I suppose that this is the new mistress?"

"I am coming to live with you, John, very soon, and I thought that I would like to see my new home first."

Taking her father by the arm, she led him into the kitchen, the only room that was furnished. Soon a comfortable meal was prepared, and Edith was pleased to see her father so cheerfully enjoying his dinner. After dinner, she led him around the orchard, among the cows and poultry, and he seemed quite delighted with his visit.

"Edith, I should like to pay a long visit here, it seems so comfortable."

"Would you, dear father? Then you and Evey shall come, and bring little Frank along. It would be so nice to have their company."

After all necessary arrangements, Edith turned homewards, promising her father the pleasure of another visit to Hazel Glen. In a few weeks, the furniture for a sitting room, and for Mr. Clifford's and Eveleen's chambers was sent, and one fine day, Edith set out again with her father, to the new home. She had some trouble, however, in leaving him, for he clung as closely to her as if she were a mother, instead of a child; but, on promising to come very soon, he consented to let her go.

Soon all the preparations were completed, and the business of moving commenced; Madge receiving the furniture at Hazel Glen, and Edith superintending the removal. Mr. Clifford was greatly puzzled, for he recognized much of the furniture from Ravenswood. The house was speedily arranged, all the family sent away excepting Edith, Uncle Peter, and nurse. One sad visit to the old elm, to the riverside, to Woodbine Cottage, and to the graves of her beloved, and Edith turned back forever upon the dear home of her childhood, the scene of so many joys and sorrows. Another step was taken in her earthly pilgrimage, but still upward and onward, and by the side of "the green pastures and still waters of salvation," she walked with a serene and even joyful step.

When she arrived at Hazel Glen, her father was standing on the piazza, watching for his daughter. Limping forward on his crutch, he embraced her affectionately, and said, "Edith, how is it? They are bringing Ravenswood here: here are the tables and the chairs, the pictures and the harp, and the piau; but these are not the trees, and I cannot see the river."

"The best of it is here, dear father, all your children, and that makes home; don't it, father?"

"Yes it is; Edith, where you are, there is home for your father. But you are tired, Edith. There is a nice supper waiting for you."

Madge led her up to her own room. Every familiar article had been neatly arranged: the same white muslin curtains, her

book-case, her work-table, everything just as it was at Ravenswood; only the room was not quite so large, nor the ceiling so high; but then it was so cosy, so comfortable! Kissing Madge, she said, "It is all right, dear: it looks very home-like already, Madge."

Descending to the dining-room, a very nice supper, with her favorite dishes, was prepared; and after partaking of the plentiful repast, Edith consecrated her new home to God and heaven; and retiring that night, blessed God for this quiet sanctuary in the midst of his own beautiful works.

Soon she found that she was too far from any place of worship to think of attending regularly, and her benevolent spirit commenced the work of exploring the neighborhood. She found that many families lived within the space of two or three miles, and that all along the Glen were scattered poor people, who worked in the neighboring factories, which bordered a creek close by. The population was greater than around Ravenswood; and she had not been there more than five or six weeks ere she made an attempt to open a Sunday-school in her own house. The hall was large, and in summer seats were brought in, and thus her first efforts commenced.

On the first Sunday, five dirty, ragged children made their appearance. She took them into the kitchen, and Mary showed them how to tidy themselves. Edith gave them some good advice about cleanliness, provided them with hymn-books and spelling-books,—for they could not read,—and after some religious instruction they were sent home, much pleased with their first Sunday. On the next Sunday ten came, and so until, by the close of the summer, she had gathered fifty. Benches were now provided, and the school prospered. Madge, Blanche, and Adele all aided in teaching. Her father seemed interested, and she gave him a class of little boys, whom he taught the elements of education; but always at the end of his exercises he gave the little fellows such sweet and holy instruction, that none who heard him could restrain a gushing tear.

Gerald and Ralph could not reach them so easily as form-

erly, consequently their visits were not so frequent; but, when they first came up the glen, Edith perceived that they were accompanied by a stranger, who, on entering the house, she recognized as Mr. Percival. He was received kindly and entertained hospitably, for Edith could not forget the debt of gratitude which she owed to him; and, moreover, receiving him as one of God's ambassadors, she esteemed it a privilege to entertain him as a servant of her Lord.

On Sunday morning, his eye glistened with delight as he saw the preparations for the Sunday-school; and Edith was well provided on that day, for Ralph, Gerald, and Mr. Percival, all aided her. A notice given in the morning brought a large number in the evening to a cottage lecture, given by Mr. Percival. Many of the families of the better class attended; and after service, Edith suggested the idea of regular religious services on Sunday evening. Many thought it impracticable, but Edith waited patiently for the leadings of Providence. Mr. Percival remained a few days, and expressed great interest in Edith's work; but Madge and Adele whispered to each other that it was plain enough his interest was in Edith's self.

After a short time, Mr. Clifford began to sigh for home, and asked Edith "if it was not time to return?"

"Would you not like to stay here, father?" asked Edith; "we have such a pleasant home, and there is so much of the furniture of our old home here."

"But, Edith, we are wanted at Ravenswood; autumn is coming, and there is a great deal to do for the winter."

It was hard to persuade him to be contented. At last Edith thought of the little boys in Sunday-school, and said, "Why, father, what would become of your little boys in the Sunday-school? They are very fond of you, and they are learning so fast: it would seem a pity to give them up."

"True, Edith: that would never do; I should be very sorry if they would not come any more to Sunday-school." From that time he ceased to talk about going home, and continued to teach the little boys their simple lessons.

Another means of usefulness was started, in her Saturday

afternoon class, which consisted of young girls, whom she taught to write, to cipher, and to sew, mingling religious truth with their other instruction. Her father was deeply interested in all her works of benevolence; and though he seemed to exhibit no interest in other things, it was an affecting sight to see him, prematurely old, bending over his Bible for hours at a time; coming to Edith with all the simplicity of a child for explanation of difficult passages, and ready always to help, in his simple way, in her deeds of charity. His memory still seemed clouded. Events occurring recently, he seldom remembered for more than a day at a time, but past occurrences were present, as though transacted but yesterday. Thus, he always connected Edith's name with Gerald: for he only remembered their early engagement; but the history of Blanche had faded from his memory, and he never could understand why Edith and Gerald were not associated as formerly. Sometimes he thought that Frank had gone away, but, when talking with broken-hearted Eveleen, then he realized that he was no more among the living.

Clouds rested on all subjects except on that of religion. More humble, more docile, more prayerful daily, there could be no doubt of the great moral change which had passed upon Mr. Clifford; and Edith still hoped that time and quietness, with the blessing of God, would yet restore his shattered intellect wholly. Engaged in constant efforts to bless others, the poignant remembrance of the past was daily fading from her heart, and she constantly realized the blessedness of those "green pastures and still waters," by which the Saviour leads his flock.

One evening she led her father out, on his usual walk down the shady glen. He appeared to have something on his mind. "Edith," said he, "I was reading to-day, where our Saviour was baptized; and when he gave his last message to his disciples, did he not say, 'Go, baptize them: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?'"

"He did, father; and it is our duty to do the same."

"Edith, I believe that I am a changed man. I know that I

love the Lord Jesus, and I want to obey all his commands. I was brought up among the Friends, Edith, and I have never been baptized. Do you think Mr. Berkely would baptize me? Perhaps he might think me too weak-minded for such an act."

"I think not, dear father. We will send for him to-morrow."

On the following week, the good pastor paid his first visit to Hazel Glen, and fully convinced of the reality of the spiritual change which had enlightened the diseased mind of his old friend, unhesitatingly received him into the fold of Christ. Silver hairs had mingled with the raven locks which once adorned his noble head; and the step of the once proud man was feeble, and his voice tremulous; but a look of childlike peace and simplicity rested upon his features, as he knelt to receive the pastor's blessing.

Mr. Berkely listened to Edith's account of the destitution of her neighborhood, and promised to interest himself in obtaining books, papers, &c., for her enterprise of Christian benevolence. He was deeply affected when he looked upon the ethereal complexion of Eveleen Clifford, and perceived she was rapidly preparing to follow her husband home.

The family had so long been deprived of the regular means of grace, that, sending an invitation to Christian families to join in the service, on the following Sunday, Mr. Berkely administered the communion to the family circle, and, for the first time, Mr. Clifford, partaking of the holy service, was fully received into the Church of Christ.

Eveleen seemed rapidly to grow in grace, but Edith saw, with the rest of the family, that her flight was upward. She interested herself in the Sunday-school, so long as her strength allowed of such labors, but at last was compelled to resign her class into the hands of another teacher. One evening, seated alone in the parlor, Edith overheard her playing a sweet prelude, and singing, in tender, mournful tones, these touching lines:

"I am wearing awa', Jean
Like snaw in the thaw, Jean,
I am wearing awa'
To the land o' the leal.

"There's nae sorrow there, Jean,
But a's bright and fair, Jean,
And soon I'll be there,
In the land o' the leal."

With a soft sigh, Edith entered, and the sweet woman said, mournfully, "That is true, Edith; I shall soon be with Frank, and my blessed Saviour. The hand of death was placed upon my heart when my husband departed, and I am going gently home." Edith could not answer, her heart was too full. From that evening, her strength rapidly failed. Sweet and touching was the communion between the broken-hearted Eveleen and Mr. Clifford,—reading to her daily, and watching over her departing moments, as tenderly as if she were his own daughter. Anxious to see her parents, they were sent for, and arrived in time to receive her parting sigh.

It was on Sunday evening when the last messenger arrived. "Take me near the window, Edith, let me see the sun once more. In the land where I am going, 'the sun shall not go down by day, neither the moon by night;' there is no sickness, no death, no parting in heaven. I shall soon be at home. Edith, you will be a mother to my child; Frank left him to you, dear, if I should be taken away. Bring up my darling boy for God, for heaven, Edith. I have prayed constantly, that he may become a minister. Now lay me down, Edith. Mother, father, come near me; kiss me once before I go; follow me to heaven. My sins are all pardoned, through a Saviour's blood; in him alone I trust." Calmly, sweetly, the spirit passed away; and before the last rays of the setting sun had faded from the horizon, the soul of Eveleen Clifford was with her Saviour, in that land where all tears were forever wiped from her eyes.

In a few days, they laid her by the side of her beloved husband, where, together, they sleep in Jesus. So grew the family chain in heaven; and as link by link was lifted to the skies, they were still invisibly united to those which yet remained on earth.



CHAPTER XXV.

AUTUMN LEAVES AND THE OLD ELM TREE.



ONE day, late in the afternoon, Edith observed an old vehicle driving slowly up the glen, and, as it drew nearer, she perceived that it was the old gig, and Aunt Priscilla. She welcomed the old lady cordially, who looked around with evident satisfaction on Edith's home.

"Well, sure now, it's a pleasant sight to see you the mistress of your own home, with no master to say what you shall do."

"I owe it all to you, dear aunty, and can never tell you how grateful I am for all your goodness."

"Take an old woman's advice, Edith: never bring a master here; you'd rue the day, mark my words."

"You need not fear, aunty, my lot in life is fixed; I am to be a mother to the many, and not to the few. Orphan children, and an afflicted father, claim my services, and they shall have them."

"Well, dear, you've been a good mother here, and God will bless you; your latter days will be full of peace, and your place in heaven among the highest. And you've lost another, Edith, since I was here. Well, I wasn't surprised to hear that Evey had gone, for I always reckoned that she could not live without her husband. How is your father now, Edith?"

"His health is excellent, but he is still lame, and his mind feeble, although I see some improvement,—he is more cheerful, and shows a great deal of interest in all good works. You've come to make me a long visit, aunty. I have a great deal to show you, and many questions to ask."

Aunt Priscilla was soon busy among the poultry, interested herself about the dairy, the preserves, the pickles, and the jellies, for she had been famous in her day in these departments; but Edith was pained on observing the great change in her old relation; a trifle fatigued her, her memory was bad, and her health much impaired. She redoubled her kindness to the old lady, for she saw that her pilgrimage was nearly ended.

Edith was still hopeful about her plans of benevolence. She had named the hill directly back of the house, Mount Pisgah, and imagination saw already the little church which she intended should adorn its summit. Her Sunday-school prospered abundantly. Other teachers had become interested, and a great change was manifest in the whole neighborhood. Instead of groups of dirty, ragged children, climbing trees, robbing birds' nests, swimming in the creek, or pilfering fruit from the farmers' orchards, might now be seen everywhere, companies of neatly clad youth, wending their way up the glen, with cheerful, smiling faces, to their pleasant Sunday-school. An improvement in morals was everywhere apparent. The parents began to take some interest in the new order of things, and Miss Edith became an oracle among them. In all their troubles they came to her for advice: if there were dissensions, she endeavored to heal them; if distress, to alleviate its keenness; if sickness, to smooth its pillow; if death laid its cold hand upon any of her flock, she was near to whisper words of comfort, and to hold up a crucified Saviour before the departing soul. Her house was always open, on Sunday evenings, for cottage lectures; and when no clergyman could be obtained, or when Ralph was not present, she read a practical sermon, and conducted the religious exercises. The evening congregations increased rapidly, and

Edith consulted Mr. Berkely as to the expediency of commencing her subscription for her church. Pleased with the activity of her spirit, he encouraged her efforts, promised to raise a subscription for her in his own parish, and named the new church, St. Paul's the Less. Moreover, as his own son was just ordained, this was precisely the spot where he would wish him to commence his labors. Edith offered him a home in her own house, and volunteered to raise a sufficient sum to find him clothes and books. Full of joy at her pleasant prospects, she immediately went around among her neighbors, who subscribed liberally; and Aunt Priscilla, always ready to aid in Edith's good deeds, added herself one hundred dollars.

The young pastor commenced his labors immediately: soon ascertained whom he might count among his flock, recorded their names, and most faithfully cultivated his field of labor. He was a young man of ardent piety and untiring zeal, and preached the doctrines of the Cross with the love of the Apostle John. Edith's house soon became too strait for the rapidly increasing flock. There was no other church in the neighborhood. Attracted by the fervent preaching, and the sweet, solemn music of these cottage lectures, persons of all classes came, and frequently, not only the house, but the piazza, was full of earnest listeners.

Edith opened her subscription book for her church. At first but little interest was manifested. Many thought that a school-house would answer; but she was not to be deterred by difficulties. Believing that it was the will of Providence that this enterprise should succeed, she followed its leadings, and looked forward hopefully to final success. Aunt Priscilla headed her list with a noble contribution from "a friend;" and as it was not to be of her own denomination, her liberality was the more remarkable. Determined to carry her undertaking forward, Edith left home for awhile, leaving her family in the charge of her sisters, and even with full leave of absence of her father, when he understood that she was going on behalf of the little church.

First, in the neighborhood of Ravenswood, she obtained liberal subscriptions, and then proceeding to New York, she interested a number of zealous Christians, and obtained large contributions there. Attended by Ralph, she obtained a plan from one of the best architects for a church, to seat about five hundred, a minute calculation of its cost, and with sanguine hopes, returned home. She had joyful intelligence for the young pastor, who advised immediate steps for building. Writing to Ralph, he was fully authorized to engage workmen, and to send them down immediately. In the answer which he returned, he reported one thousand dollars subscribed by his own friends and acquaintances; and Edith, on examining her list, found that she had sufficient to pay for the building, excepting one thousand dollars. That, Mr. Berkely proposed should be raised by a mite society, in which all should be interested. On the following week, the workmen arrived. The cellar was soon dug; and the corner-stone was laid in the presence of Mr. Berkely, their old pastor, with his son, their young minister, Mr. Percival, a number of clergymen interested in the enterprise, and a large company from the neighboring families.

Edith had chosen a lovely spot for her church, on the top of a hill, surrounded by a grove of fine old trees, which afforded a pleasant shade in summer. The corner-stone was laid on a propitious day, and the prospects of St. Paul's the Less was pronounced by all highly encouraging. Edith's spirits rose as her work prospered, and her dear old father walked daily to the building; watching its progress, he seemed to identify himself completely with the undertaking, and his whole mind was filled with this one thought.

One Saturday evening, when Gerald and Ralph arrived, the latter, holding up a letter from England, said, "Adele, what will you give me for this?"

"Many thanks, if you will not keep me in suspense;" and taking it hastily, she left the room. When she returned, her whole face was in a glow. "They are coming, sister," said she, addressing Edith.

"Who are coming, dear?"

"Why, Clara and Lionel; they will be here in the next steamer. They are coming to visit their aunt, Mrs. Somers, in New York, but will spend some time with us."

"Well I shall be glad to see them: we must make them as happy as we can. We must get two rooms ready for them."

"I think not, Edith; I know that Clara would rather be with me. I can have a small bedstead put up in my room, and I will give her the best."

"We'll have the green room ready for Mr. Percy,—that is the largest and most airy. When may we look for them?"

"In about a month, I suppose. I wonder if Clara is much altered?"

Adele's spirits were in a high state of excitement until the day arrived. Ralph and Gerald had been commissioned to be on the look out for their arrival, and when the last Saturday of the month came, Adele watched anxiously for their coming up the glen. When they appeared, they were attended by a third, but it was Mr. Percival, whose visits now were very frequent. Ralph made her little heart beat tumultuously, by announcing the arrival of the steamer on that very day, with the names of Mr. and Miss Percy among the passengers.

Adele could scarcely wait for Monday. Accompanying Ralph to New York, she spent a week at her aunt's, devoting all her time to her European friends. When Lionel first met Adele, he said, smiling, "And this is really the wild shepherdess of the Alps?"

Nine years had made a great change in her appearance. The sportive, merry child had merged into the graceful, animated woman; her bright black eyes sparkled with intelligence, and the expression of perfect frankness, mingled with the arch humor that dwelt upon her countenance, lent a bewitching charm to her whole face.

"We have come to spend a year in America," said Lionel; "that is, if we can tolerate the Yankees that long."

"Indeed," replied Adele, mischievously; "and I suppose that you would make us believe that your visit is a great favor."

I prophesy that, before you go home, you will find out some thing of Brother Jonathan's independence; take care, Mr. Percy, how you rouse up his old spirit."

"I shall take very good care how I rouse up yours, Miss Adele, for I am afraid that I should always have the worst of the bargain."

At the close of a week, Adele took her friends to Hazel Glen, and introducing them to her sisters, they received a hearty welcome. They were deeply interested in Edith—for they saw that she was a superior character,—fascinated with the beauty of Blanche, and charmed with the piquant graces and bright intelligence of Madge. Aunt Priscilla amused them; and Mr. Clifford, with his simple childish piety, and dependence upon his daughter Edith, awakened their most tender sympathy. They heard the history of the portraits of Mrs. Clifford, Frank, and Eveleen, and were convinced that Edith's was a character almost made perfect by suffering. Clara had a sweet voice, and was fond of pathetic music. One evening she had been singing for some time a number of tender, mournful airs. "Adele, I want to sing you one of Mrs. Norton's airs," and she sang the following with deep pathos:

"Thy name was once the magic spell,
By which my heart was bound,
And burning dreams of light and love
Were wakened by that sound.

"Long years, long years have passed away,
And altered is thy brow,
And we, who met so fondly once,
Must meet as strangers now.

"But still thy name, thy blessed name,
My lonely bosom fills,
Like an echo that hath lost itself
Among the distant hills."

Adele was quiet. She had observed Edith's emotions, who, affected to tears, had arisen suddenly and left the room. Clara perceived that something was amiss, for she saw Edith's countenance as she departed. "Do not sing that song again,

Clara," said Adele, "it has a sad history. It was once a favorite of Gerald Fortescue, and now it has such application to Edith's story, that she cannot bear to hear it. I know that it awakens tender memories which she is striving so nobly to forget." And Adele proceeded to relate her sister's trials to Clara Percy, who listened with the most tender sympathy, and from that hour, the deepest reverence marked her whole deportment to Edith Clifford.

Lionel and Clara were much interested in the progress of the church, for they were both members of the same at home; and, having abundant means, they each contributed handsomely. Anxious to be settled at home, Gerald urged the speedy conclusion to his engagement with Blanche, and the following autumn was fixed upon as the time for the marriage.

Edith, with her usual devotion, insisted on furnishing most of the wedding trousseau, for her aunt kept her abundantly supplied with means. Clara looked on with silent admiration, as she saw how busily the noble woman was occupied, in preparing a handsome outfit for her sister; but she felt often greatly annoyed, when she saw how little delicate consideration was manifest in Blanche, who now exhibited the natural weakness of her character. Mr. Clifford could not be made to understand how all these preparations could be made for Blanche, insisting that Edith was the bride.

It was to be a family wedding, to which none were invited but the Morris family, from New York, and the Percys, who were their guests. Their old pastor, Mr. Berkely, was to perform the ceremony. All preparations being concluded, the night before was one of bitter trial to Edith. Memory would recall the past, and sometimes she felt as if she could scarcely maintain her composure. But little sleep visited her eyelids, and she arose in the morning unrefreshed and weary. Fearing that Mr. Clifford would make some embarrassing mistake, it was concluded that Edith should give the bride away, Madge and Adele acting as bridesmaids, and Ralph and Lionel as their partners. Edith dressed herself mechanically. Attired in a pure white muslin, whose full skirts flowed gracefully around

her dignified form, with no ornaments save a few white camelias in her rich dark hair, and her mother's diamond pin, she looked the very picture of a noble, lovely woman. Going to her sister's room, she stood for a moment enchanted with the figure of loveliness that burst upon her. A double skirt of fine lace, richly embroidered, a bride's veil shading the blushing face, the round white arms, the pure neck, and the hair adorned with her mother's beautiful pearls, mixed with diamonds. Seldom was seen a more bewitching creature than the one who met her as the bride of Gerald Fortescue.

Madge and Adele were dressed alike, in fine lace, with rosebuds adorning their hair, and diamond ornaments. Edith took Blanche in her arms, and, kissing her, said, "God bless you, Blanche. May you be a happy wife." And descending to the parlor, she awaited the entrance of the bridal company.

During the ceremony, Edith stood near her father, fearing some expressions that might embarrass the company. When the question was asked, "Who giveth this woman away," &c., Edith, with a cheek pale as marble, and a hand that trembled violently, stepped forward, for one moment, and presented her sister. Clara Percy saw her step back, gasping for one moment, then raising her eyes heavenward, and folding her hands upon her breast, she looked like one whose thoughts were in another world, and truly were they. For a second, dreams of the past rushed over her soul; then came thoughts of the blessed rest when trials all were over; then earnest prayers for Gerald and for Blanche; and by the time that the ceremony was over she had recovered her calmness.

"How is it, Edith?" said Mr. Clifford. "They have married the wrong one. You are the proper bride."

"Do not speak, dear father," replied Edith. "It is all right. There is no mistake. They will hear you, and I should be so distressed." Gerald received Edith's congratulations with evident embarrassment, for he knew the struggle that had compressed that lip so tightly must have been severe, but he saw sincerity in the clear, truthful eyes, when she blessed him in the name of the Lord.

Ere leaving for their homes, Edith called Blanche into her room, and gave all that kind, sisterly advice which she deemed necessary. "Remember, Blanche, that you are a wife now. It is a holy calling, dearest. Have no concealments from your husband. Study his happiness and comfort. His interests are yours. You must have no separate life. Henceforth, you are one. You may be very happy, if together you live for God ; but if for the world and its pleasures, you will be shipwrecked."

"Thank you, dear sister, for all your goodness," answered Blanche. "I will try to follow your advice." After the wedding dinner, the bridal company, consisting of Gerald and Blanche, with the bridesmaids, their partners, and Clara Percy, set out for Oak Hall, and Edith found herself comparatively alone, excepting that Lilly, now a lovely young girl of seventeen, had come home, to remain. Her education had been as thorough as her sad deficiency had allowed, and she was a remarkably fine musician. Her likeness to her mother was remarkable. The same flaxen hair, the same delicate features and complexion, the same blue eyes, though sightless, her form, her step, her voice, were all there. Indeed, so perfect was the resemblance, that Mr. Clifford would sit holding her hand and gazing in her face for hours together, whispering, "My Mary has come back again, only she seems blind now, for she does not look on me so lovingly as she used to do." This fancy seemed to possess the old man, and as it increased his happiness, he was allowed to indulge in the delusion.

When the fall months had passed away, Blanche accompanied her husband to the city, where the beauty and wealth of the young bride attracted much attention. Under the patronage of her aunt, she was soon immersed in scenes of gayety and fashion. Mrs. Gerald Fortescue was evidently the belle of the season. Her beauty, her diamonds, her carriage, were the theme of every mouth. She was completely intoxicated by the adulation which she received, and Gerald found that the young wife was more anxious about how she should appear, and what compliments were bestowed upon her, than

how she should please her husband or make his home happy.

When engaged in a new picture, he would often say, "Will you ride down to my studio this morning, dear? I have a picture which I wish to show you." Frequently, some other engagement, to the milliners, or jewellers, or dress-makers, must be attended to; and if she did go, her manner was listless, her mind preoccupied, and her lack of sympathy used sometimes to bring before him, in his lonely studio, a kindling dark eye, and an encouraging smile, that were once the animating stimulus of his young genius. But his beautiful Blanche, his fashionable wife, had no sympathizing tastes. Sometimes he would bring home an interesting book to dinner, and would say, "Now, dear, can we not have a quiet evening at home? I have such an interesting volume."

"Let me see. I believe I have two engagements: one at Mrs. Scott's and another at Mrs. Lisle's. I should like to accommodate you, Gerald; but I don't see how I can refuse these ladies;" then rising, and throwing her arm coaxingly around her husband, she would continue: "Just let me go to-night, dear; I'll promise to stay at home to-morrow;" and Gerald could not refuse the melting eyes, and with a sigh would say, "Go, dear, I will try to do without you, for I am not well enough to go out to-night."

In his lonely evenings, he could not but remember the hours spent in listening to a rich melodious voice, that used to read with him, and the friend that was always ready to give up her own pleasures to gratify him. He tried to make excuses for Blanche, for he remembered her youth and loveliness, and hoped, when she retired again to the country, that it would be different.

She was often so tired when Sunday came that she spent her mornings in bed, and was seldom ready to accompany her husband to church, who had been very punctual ever since his marriage. Early in the spring, he urged a return to Oak Hall. He saw that her health was suffering, and he felt anxious to bring her once more into contact with rural scenes and occupa-

tions. But she had been so completely spoiled by her winter in New York, that he had but little pleasure in her society. Indolent, self-indulgent, and devoted only to dress, he felt sadly the want of a companion in his young wife. Frequently she had not left her room when he started for the city, and was often still in her dishabille when he returned. Occasionally she would summon energy enough to dress for a ride; but all her thoughts seemed centred in herself. She was never happy, unless surrounded by a gay company from the city; for them she sparkled, and smiled, and sang, but for her husband she only yawned, and he keenly felt the bitter need of a congenial spirit. Kind and indulgent as he possibly could be, he sought to draw her out of herself; but he found the task a fruitless one, and endeavored to find comfort in his profession.

Edith had received many invitations to visit her sister. Hearing discouraging accounts of her state of health, she set out for Oak Hall, intending to spend a few days ere she returned. She was received by Gerald with great cordiality. On asking for Blanche, "She is not well," replied Gerald; "she told me to say that she would be down stairs directly: she is dressing." Edith felt somewhat chilled, as she thought that her sister should have sent for her to her room. She did not know that she had been crying bitterly, because her husband would not consent to her going to a large party on the river. "You know, dear, that you are not well enough, and I cannot consent." This was all that he had said, but it had thrown her into an agony of grief. After the lapse of an hour, Blanche made her appearance, pale and spiritless, but evidently glad to see her sister. At the tea-table, Edith perceived that there was no cordiality between Gerald and his young wife. The husband was kind, considerate, tender, but the wife cold, constrained, distant. Edith could not bear to ask any questions, for she was principled against interference in domestic disturbances. She followed Blanche to her room, made many particular inquiries about her health, and feared that her sister was ruining the greatest of all blessings by self-indulgence. In the morning, Gerald, as usual, affectionately

bade his wife good-by, but she turned a cold cheek to his lips, and Edith saw the tear wounded affection quivering in his eye as he bade her good-morning.

Blanche seemed to have no employment,—wandering about all day, complaining of headache, and wishing that somebody would come up from New York. After dinner the servant announced company, and Edith was surprised to see with what alacrity Blanche dressed herself, and flew down stairs to meet her dear friends,—some very fashionable ladies from the city, who reproached her bitterly for not joining their party the evening before. Blanche replied, sorrowfully, “My husband would not let me; and I was vexed enough, I can tell you.”

“If you mean to let him interfere with you in this manner, you may as well give up all hopes of enjoyment. I go where I please, and my husband does the same. We never interfere with each other, and are a very comfortable pair; that’s what you must do, my dear.” Edith listened indignantly, and wondered not at the estrangement between Blanche and her husband, if this was one of her advisers.

When Gerald returned, he received the visitors coldly, and was evidently much annoyed by their presence. Blanche was still more attentive, and Edith was deeply pained at this state of affairs. Blanche had been married but one year, and yet the want of congeniality was so apparent that a stranger might easily see that there was no happiness at Oak Hall. On the next day, Blanche was very much indisposed, and Gerald remained at home, requesting to be left alone. Edith repaired to the family sitting-room, where she found Gerald, sitting in a desponding attitude.

“Blanche is not at all well to-day, Gerald. I feel very uneasy about her. She manifests symptoms like my mother.”

“Ah, Edith! I have not made her happy; she prefers any society to mine. She has bad advisers,” answered Gerald.

“This is a dangerous subject, Gerald,” replied Edith. “You must remember that Blanche is your wife, and you must be careful how you complain of her, even to me.”

“I know that it is so, Edith. I love her, sister; I try to

make her happy ; I have studied her wishes ; but I do feel as if she ought to study my comfort a little."

"Would it not be well, Gerald, for you to exercise some authority concerning some of her associates? For instance, the lady that was here yesterday."

"If I should do so, I should be called a tyrant at once," replied Gerald.

"If you wish any domestic happiness, you must be more independent. This woman has no correct principles, and is no companion for a young wife."

"What ought I to do?" asked Gerald.

"Guard your wife from improper associates, and she will see the propriety of such a course. Blanche is weak and irresolute, but not unprincipled," answered Edith.

When alone with Blanche, Edith, with all the tenderness of an affectionate mother, expostulated. "Dear Blanche, you are all wrong," said Edith. "If you wish to be happy, you must commence your married life all over again. You are placing yourself in direct opposition to your husband, who is devoted to you ; and if you do not at once change your whole course, you will know no domestic comfort."

Blanche threw herself upon her sister's bosom, and bursting into tears, said, "Sister, I am very miserable. I know that I have done wrong. I think going to New York spoiled me. They flattered me so much that they intoxicated my young head, and made me neglect my husband."

"Will you promise me one thing, Blanche?" asked Edith.

"What is it, sister?"

"Never to visit that woman who came here yesterday."

"I will promise, sister ; but then Gerald must not take me any more to New York. I know that he will be glad if I say that I would rather live here."

"Go tell him now, dear, at once ; it would relieve him, I know. I can see that he is suffering."

Blanche ran off, under the impulse of her present feeling, and, knocking at her husband's door, she said, "Gerald, let me in, I have a great deal to say."

He opened the door, and perceiving that traces of tears were on her face, he led her affectionately to a little couch in the room, and said, kindly, "What ails my wife?"

"I have come, Gerald, to ask forgiveness," said Blanche, as she laid her head upon his shoulder. "I have been a very negligent selfish wife, and am not going to be so any more. I want you to promise me that we shall always live at Oak Hall, and that you will not take me any more to that heartless New York, where there are so many bad wives."

"You have my full forgiveness, Blanche," answered her husband; "and I can readily promise not to go to New York, for I have always thought it a bad place for my little wife."

"Now, dear, we shall never be cold again, will we?" whispered Blanche, as she looked affectionately in his face.

There was a wholly different aspect of affairs when they met at the tea-table that evening, and Edith felt happy at the reconciliation which she had effected.

Leaving the two to enjoy their tête-à-tête, she walked over to Ravenswood, and on coming in view of the familiar spot, she was reminded of her own early days by the scene which presented itself. Mr. Lindsay had rented the place, and having a large family, Edith perceived a number of children running about, some playing games and trundling hoops, the boys flying kites, and the little one riding on a rocking horse. The joyous scene reminded her of her early days, when her own unbroken family circle inhabited the old mansion, and when her brother and sisters gambolled about its pleasant walks and under its green trees. Rambling on, she came to the old elm tree, the scene of so many joys and sorrows.

It was an evening in autumn. The sun had sunk in all the gorgeous glory of that peculiar season; the landscape was glowing with the splendid foliage of an American autumn; the leaves had begun to fall, and lay around her feet, as silent monitors of the dreariness which would soon clothe all nature in sadness. She seated herself under the same old tree, where, eleven years before, she had dreamed the first rosy vision of youth. Now, she looked upon the

splendid clouds, which then spoke to her of earthly happiness, but now only of the New Jerusalem, where tears are wiped from all faces, and where sorrow and sighing come no more. Now, she looked upon the decaying leaves, and thought of the hopes which, like them, were prostrate in the dust. In reviewing the past, memory carried her back over the distant hills, and through the shady valleys of life, and whispered to her heart many echoes of tender, sorrowful music; back to the days of trusting, joyous childhood, when a soft blue eye beamed kindly on her, and a sweet loving voice sang cradle-hymns around her evening hours. Now, they came again in tones of touching, soothing melody, as she heard,

"Hush, my babe, lie still in slumber,
Holy angels guard thy bed;
Heavenly blessings, without number,
Gently falling round thy head."

Farther on, childhood passed away; buoyant, joyful youth succeeded. Then came a bright dream, which comes but once, the long year of her heart's devotion, and the wreck which had succeeded. The airs which Gerald loved came back from those green valleys, and shady lanes, and mocked her with their sweetness. She had made a willing sacrifice, and would have felt compensated if Gerald and Blanche were only happy, but when she realized how little there was in their home to satisfy the cravings of Gerald's heart, she was tempted to ask, why this bitter trial and these sad results? but instantly the thought was crushed, and she could still say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." "What I know not now, I shall know hereafter." Then rose the visions of her mother's death-bed. High and holy hymns, from a deep, solemn organ, rolled over from that distant chamber, and she asked her heart, "Have I redeemed that solemn vow?" and as her spirit answered "Yes," she was comforted, when low notes, of soft and plaintive music, seemed to be wafted to her from the world above. Then came the visions of her sojourn

amid the romantic scenery of the Pyrenees, when confidence seemed to exist between herself and Gerald; and she forced back the tear and quenched the sighs, as the stirring songs of the mountaineers, brought back the sweet remembrance. Another vision, of a manly brow, dark eye, and an eloquent voice, early quenched in death, a pale, drooping lily, that bent beneath the stroke that severed her from one she loved so devotedly, brought to her heart music, wild, tender and touching as the whisperings of the Æolian harp, in the solitude of that autumnal hour.

The shadows of evening deepened around her, the breeze sighed mournfully as it passed by, and she could almost fancy that these spirits of her loved ones might yet, perchance, linger near her pilgrim footsteps. Higher and holier became her communion with heaven. Looking forward to "the rest that remaineth for the people of God," the music of that upper sphere of blessedness and love came swelling over the turrets of that place in the skies, like "the voice of many waters; and in the harpings that she imagined around the throne, she fancied the raptured voices of her mother, of Frank, and of Eveleen, mingling with the heavenly host.

Blessing God for the hope of reunion in that better land, she turned away, peacefully, from the old trysting place, and looked forward trustingly, yes, even joyfully, to the path of usefulness and peace, which her Father had doubtless appointed her. In the future rose her little church, a home for guidance and peace and rest on earth, the prophet of glory and endless life to many, who should be gathered there within the Saviour's fold.

She thought of her aged father and her blind sister, to whom she was so necessary; of dear Emily and orphan Frank, who needed so much a mother's care; of her poor people and her Sunday-scholars; and she felt that, with such abundant objects for her ministry of love, she could never be unhappy, for she could never be unemployed,—the secret cause of so much of the misery of females.

With a spirit strengthened by this hour of communion, she returned to Gerald and Blanche, pleased to see the effects of her sisterly love; for Blanche seemed really in earnest in her efforts to atone for the past. Gerald yielded again to her fascinations, and fancied himself happy.

Edith returned home, warmly welcomed by every member of her beloved family. Her aged father met her with outstretched arms, little Frank clung to "Aunt Edith," with sweet expressions of artless love, Emily jumped about with sportive joy, and Aunt Priscilla, feeble as she appeared, insisted on making Edith's favorite cake, for tea, and a large bowl of syllabub, very much in fashion at Hazel Glen.

"Indeed, dear aunty, I fear that I am in a fair way of being spoiled. I do not think that a queen could excite more commotion."

"Well, Edith, it is just as it should be," answered Aunt Priscilla, "for you are the guardian angel here, and that is better than a queen, any day."

On the next visit paid by Ralph, he was accompanied, as usual, by Mr. Percival, who made it very manifest that Edith was the object of attraction to Hazel Glen. Ere he departed, he made an offer of his heart and hand to Edith, which she kindly, delicately, but firmly declined. She esteemed and admired him, was grateful to him as her kind preserver, but her deep affections once disappointed, awoke no more for one, but diffused themselves over the charmed circle of her home and its neighborhood.

She looked forward to single life with a serene and hopeful spirit, knowing that there were hundreds whom she might benefit, and aware that she could gather around her always a circle whom she might bless. She was far above the vulgar fear of being called an "old maid," and smiled at the folly of those poor weak creatures, who, rather than incur that odium, take false vows, marry even worthless men whom they do not love, and sacrifice the happiness and true respectability of a lifetime, for fear of the mere bugbear of a silly name.

It pained Edith to see Mr. Percival's depression, for she knew the bitterness of blighted hopes; but she saw her own mission clearly, and hoped that time and a spirit of submission would temper the keenness of the disappointment.

"I go, Miss Clifford," said he, "in about two months, to my field of labor; if it is the will of Providence that I go alone, I will endeavor to submit, but I had hoped for a different result."

"I am a home missionary, Mr. Percival," replied Edith; "my path is as plain as if a voice from heaven had placed me here, where I expect to spend my life, endeavoring to bless this humble flock, and here I expect to die."

"May God bless you, Edith Clifford, will always be my earnest prayer; and may I not hope for an interest in your daily approach to a throne of grace?"

"Of that you are always sure, Mr. Percival, and I doubt not that in your distant home you will be prosperous and happy."

"Farewell, dear Miss Clifford," and pressing her hand to his lips, and turning slowly and sadly away, the lonely missionary took his departure, and Edith saw him no more.

She was pained by the increasing debility of Aunt Priscilla. It was evident that she was rapidly passing away, and Edith, with grateful love, devoted herself to soothing the last days of her aged relative. At last, confined entirely to her room, she waited, in humble faith, on the blessed Redeemer for the last messenger, and esteemed it a great privilege that Edith was near, to minister to her in her last hours. Sustained by loving faith in the promises of the Gospel, she passed from earth, blessing her dear niece for all her tender care. Looking upon her as one of the most faithful of her parents' friends, Edith laid her mortal remains by the side of her own cherished dead, in the church-yard of old St. John's, strictly adhering to all her aunt's eccentric directions concerning the funeral.

She placed her last will in the hands of Edith, requesting that it should be opened on the morning after the funeral.

To Edith's great surprise, it was found that her whole fortune, with the exception of a few legacies to all of Mr. Clifford's children, was left entirely to her favorite niece. It was much larger than they had supposed, so that Edith found herself now in possession of a handsome income, by means of which she could exercise her benevolent wishes.

The Percys had been travelling for some months. Previous to their return to Europe they visited Hazel Glen, for a few weeks, which seemed to fly too fast for Adele. As the time approached for their departure, all her gay spirits vanished, and Lionel evidently partook of her sadness. He had always been deeply interested in the sportive child, and when he came to America and found her transformed into a lovely woman, he soon learned to love her, with a pure and manly affection; and Adele returned the sentiment with all the fervor of her warm little heart.

On the evening before leaving Hazel Glen, Lionel whispered to Edith, as they arose from the tea-table, "Will you favor me with an interview in the parlor?" Granting his request, she repaired thither. Lionel was seated beside Adele, on the sofa; she had evidently been weeping.

"I have summoned you here, Miss Clifford, to ask your blessing," said Lionel, taking Adele by the hand, and leading her to her sister. "Your sister has granted me this little hand; do you approve of her choice?"

"Most warmly, Mr. Percy; you have my hearty approval, and a sister's most earnest prayers for your happiness," answered Edith; "but is not this termination rather hurried?"

"Perhaps it may be considered so," replied Lionel, "for your mischievous little sister has been acting 'will o' the wisp' ever since I have been in America; laughing at all my protestations of affection; pretending sometimes to be deeply offended at my presumption, at others wholly indifferent. Indeed, Edith, I almost despaired of ever finding her in a serious mood; but when it came near the time of saying farewell, that set all right, and I think that the teasing days are over."

All Adele's merriment had disappeared, and it took all of Lionel's powers of persuasion to convince her that she could live even a few months apart from her dear friends. With the promise of a speedy return, he bade the family farewell, and little laughing Adele was transformed into the pensive girl, with her warm heart travelling to England in the steamer that conveyed Lionel Percy from the shores of America.



CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SISTER'S RECOMPENSE.



HE church upon Mount Pisgah rose rapidly towards heaven, stone upon stone, as a lasting monument of Edith's self-denying faith and love; and as the humble edifice mounted upon the hill-top, adding a beautiful feature to the rural landscape, so rose her hopes, her joys. Called out of herself by her holy occupations, a heart so full of heavenly aspirations could not be sad, for the sunshine of God's unfailing love dwelt in the bosom of Edith Clifford, and spread its radiance around her daily path. She had many occasions of gratitude, for although her father yet continued lame, his mind daily recovered strength; he seemed to be joining the links of memory, and was very useful to his daughter in her works of benevolence, especially in the building of the church. In this, he exhibited the deepest interest, daily reporting progress, and was even able to go to New York, for the purpose of collecting money, and inquiring about the cost of an organ, furniture, &c.

Edith was very happy in her family connections. Miss Arnold still superintended the education of Emily and Frank, and was of great advantage to Lilly in her studies of music. Madge was a very active little creature, and by systematizing her time, found abundant leisure, not only for her home duties, but for her literary pursuits. Adele was very busy in

preparing for her new life; and all the better part of Blanche's character was now developed in the responsibilities and affection of a youthful mother.

A bright advent seemed to have dawned upon Oak Hall, and when Edith paid her first visit, a dearer bond of union appeared to unite the young parents of little Mary. Blanche was never tired of praising its beauty, and in the cares of domestic life, seemed to be forgetting the fascinations of the gay world. Gerald was happy in the society of his wife and child, and although he still felt the want of a stronger spirit, he looked forward to years of happiness, with his youthful companion, and hoped that added years would bring corresponding improvement. Edith was now much occupied in purchasing the furniture and organ for her church, as it was expected that it would be ready for consecration in the fall, about one year from the time when it was first commenced. Out of her own abundant means she supplied these necessities, and cleared it entirely of debt.

Lionel had written that he might be expected in October, and Ralph was urging the conclusion of his matrimonial engagement. It was therefore proposed, that the first service in their little church should be the wedding of the two sisters. With her usual unselfishness, Edith was ready, with hand and purse, to aid in the preparations, although it cost her some tears to part with two dear sisters, the one for a distant land, and the other for New York. Time sped rapidly on. The first of October dawned upon them. The little church was completed; its spire glittered in the sunbeams of a bright autumnal day, when, from its little belfry, the first Sabbath peal awoke the inhabitants of Hazel Glen, announcing that a church of Christ, with all its purifying and holy influence, was among them. Up the hill-sides, down the shady glen, and over green fields, its silvery chimes entered hall and cottage, ringing of rest, and blessedness, and heaven; and many a stricken pilgrim blessed Edith, on that holy day, for having erected such a refuge for the weary among them.

"Do you hear the church-bell, mother?" said one of Edith's scholars. "Must not Miss Edith be happy to-day? Before she came, we had no Sunday, no church, no pretty books; nothing but wickedness."

"Yes, my child, she must feel very glad, for she has labored so hard in getting up this church."

"Is there to be church to-day, mother?"

"I think not; the bells are ringing for joy, to tell us it is done, but as it is not yet finished, we shall worship at Miss Edith's house."

And Edith sat in her room, listening with a grateful spirit to the joyous peals, and as from her window she could see the pretty church, with its spire pointing towards heaven, on the top of Mount Pisgah, she recalled the hour when she first thought of the enterprise; traced all the steps of a good Providence, which had constantly led her on, and blessed God for the whole result; while she earnestly prayed that souls might here be born for glory. As she listened she fancied the language of the bells chiming,—

Come to Jesus, come to Jesus,
Sweetly sounds the Sabbath-chimes;
From distracting cares they free us,
Weekly marking holy time:
Come to Jesus,
Peaceful rings the blessed rhyme.

In two more weeks, the church was ready for consecration, and a large congregation assembled to witness the solemn ceremony. The church was a neat edifice, with accommodations for a good Sunday-school; it was suitably furnished, and supplied with a good organ, with blind Lilly Clifford for the organist. Her performance was delightful, and as the sweet and elevating service of Edith's own beloved church was the first time conducted in a house devoted to God's service, tears of joy and gratitude bathed her face, as she sat concealed from the congregation, behind the curtains of the choir.

All the preparations for the approaching weddings were made, and the steamer was expected on the following Monday.

The day passed, however, but no arrival. Adele was very restless and anxious when Tuesday passed, and still no Lionel. She could not conceal her anxiety, as, hour after hour, she watched from the piazza the road down the glen. Late on Wednesday evening, she was still at her post. A carriage approached in the distance, and a waving hand from the window told her beating heart whom it contained. In a very few minutes, Ralph and Lionel sprang from the carriage; and clasped hands and tearful eyes expressed the joyful meeting of these parted friends.

Notice being sent to Mr. Berkely, to Gerald and Blanche, the following Saturday was appointed as the wedding-day. It was ushered in by the merry peals of the church-bells; and the grateful cottagers, determined to do honor to this occasion, had planned a surprise for the youthful brides.

As the wedding procession left the house, a little boy, in watching, ran to give notice to the rest, and when they mounted the hill, on their approach to the church-door, a large number of the Sunday-school scholars, dressed in their best attire, ranged in lines, through which the company had to pass, strewed bright fall flowers in their paths from baskets which they held in their hands. Edith and her father preceded the bridal company; following the bridesmaids and their partners came Ralph and Madge first; then Lionel and Adele; and there, in the church so hallowed by their sister's piety, they took the solemn vow which bound them to each other for life.

As brides are always interesting, the large congregation looked upon the pair who stood there in pure bridal array, completely absorbed in the scene; for it was the first public wedding that had ever been celebrated at Hazel Glen. On their return to the house, they received the congratulations of their friends, and in the afternoon met their Sunday-school children, and bestowed upon them parting gifts.

Little Mary Dennis, a warm-hearted Irish girl, could not sufficiently admire the sweet brides, and running home to her mother, she exclaimed, "Sure, now, mother, I niver seed sich a beautiful bride as Miss Adele; she was dressed so splendid, in

sich an ilegant dress, and had sich lovely flowers in her black hair."

"I don't think she's any purtier than Miss Madge," answered little Biddy O' Connor.

"Did you ever see sich a pair of eyes in anybody's head?"

"And sich a big nose," said Mary, laughing.

"Bad mauners to ye, Mary Dennis, you needn't be afther making fun of her nose," said Biddy; "it's a great deal purtier than your mean little noses."

"Just see what Miss Adele gave me," said Mary, holding up a bag of sugar-plums, and a large piece of wedding-cake; "she's a jewel of a lady, ivery inch of her."

"And havn't I got one, too?" said Biddy; "Miss Madge gave it to me wid her own little hand: it's purtier than Mary's, I'm sure, and Miss Madge is a nicer lady."

"Well, children," said Mrs. Dennis, "I do not think that the ladies would be much pleased to hear you quarrelling about your wedding favors." Whereupon the children hung their heads, and finally concluded by saying that they should miss their kind teachers, and wondered who would come next.

On the following Sunday, divine service was first celebrated in the new church, and a large and attentive congregation listened earnestly to the sermon of their young pastor. It was a day, however, of mingled joy and sorrow to Edith: joy, to meet in their own house of God, and sorrow, to feel that two of the beloved worshippers would soon be so far away. Prayers were offered for those about to go to sea, and Edith joined heartily in the service, when she remembered that her sister and her husband were the subjects of these petitions.

Monday was spent in packing all that remained of her sister's possessions; and Edith could not restrain some falling tears, when she felt that the wide ocean would soon separate her from one dear sister, and that the other was about to gather around her other objects of affection, in a distant city. With all a mother's tender interest, she gave her parting counsels to her sisters, who hung upon her with more fervent expression of affection, as they felt the pangs of separation.

"You will write often, dear Madge," said Edith; "I shall look anxiously for news."

"You need not fear, dear sister," replied Madge, "for you have been sister, mother, all to me. I may have an affectionate, tender husband in Ralph Cameron, but he can never be a more faithful, untiring friend, than my sister Edith."

"I can commit you to his care with perfect trust," replied Edith, "for I have never known a more noble Christian character. Look up to him, dear Madge, as husband, counsellor, friend."

"I am ready to do so, dear Edith. All the folly of my early youth has passed away, and I am glad to be what God has willed, second to my husband. Indeed, dear Edith, I fear that I am tempted to idolize Ralph, for he appears so faultless in my eyes."

"And, dear Adele," said Edith to her weeping sister, "you must not forget the circle at Hazel Glen. You will have a great deal to make you forget us,—a devoted husband, wealth, and all that life can give."

"Do not dream of such a possibility, dear sister," replied Adele; "all that I have and all that I am I owe to you, my sister. I can never forget the dear sister, mother of my early years."

"In your earthly happiness and prosperity, do not forget God, dear Adele: he is the gracious Giver; let his goodness lead you to love him."

"You must not think, dear Edith, because I am naturally so sportive and gay, that I have no serious thoughts. I do most earnestly desire to be a Christian, but I am so afraid of false professions, that I have never taken any public step; but I feel, dear sister, that to be a good and faithful wife, I must be made a real humble Christian."

With an arm around each beloved one, Edith commended them earnestly to the keeping of the Good Shepherd, confidently trusting that he would bring them both into his heavenly fold. Before they left her room, Edith, going to her secretary, took from thence two small cases, each containing a

perfect likeness of herself, and said, "I thought, dear sisters, that you would rather have this than any other gift."

"Thank you, dear Edith," replied both; and Madge added, "You could not have chosen anything more grateful to our feelings."

The next morning was the period fixed for departure. But little breakfast was taken by any of the family. The carriage was at the door which was to take Madge to visit her husband's family, and Adele to the steamer for Europe. Mr. Clifford gave them a father's blessing. Edith folded each beloved sister silently in her arms. Old nurse and Uncle Peter were waiting on the piazza to say farewell. With a few more hurried words of parting, the young brides turned their backs upon the home of their childhood, and with woman's trusting faith and holy love, embarked their all of earthly happiness in one human heart.

A great void was felt in the circle at Hazel Glen, but Edith, busy in her daily occupations, was peaceful and serene. Lilly's sweet society was a great comfort. Intelligent and pious, she made herself very useful to her sister; and even with her sightless eyes, gave much oral instruction to the Sunday scholars committed to her charge. Emily, at fifteen, was a sprightly, animated being, and little Frank, a boy of eight, gambolled around her, reminding her of the joyous childhood of his father. In her visits to Oak Hall she perceived that Blanche was endeavoring to fulfil the duties of a wife, but in reality she had no particular sympathy with her husband in his tastes and pursuits.

On one occasion Edith had been spending a day with Blanche. They had been talking much of Josephine, and wondering what had become of her, never having heard from her but once since her departure. That letter Gerald had received recently. Its tone was changed. It seemed to come from a disappointed spirit, and for once in her life, Josephine longed for home. She complained also of not being well, and her brother was sadly disquieted concerning his only sister. His Aunt Mary had long been dead, and Josephine was the

only near relative he had on earth. He had no clue by which to find her, for she had carefully concealed her place of residence; but still he hoped that she might seek them soon.

Walking on the piazza with Blanche, Edith perceived a carriage slowly advancing, with a large quantity of baggage. "Look, Blanche," said Edith, "there comes a stranger. I should not be surprised if it were Josephine." In a few minutes it drove up to the door, and a pale, faded woman, in middle life, stepped from the carriage, but so changed that Edith would scarcely have recognized her elsewhere. The proud, elastic step was gone, the eye dimmed, the expression of the whole face subdued and sad, and but few traces remained of the once haughty, self-reliant Josephine Fortescue.

Tears were in her eyes, as Edith welcomed her home, and her first question was, "Where is my brother?"

"He is in New York," answered Edith; "but let me take you to his wife."

"To his wife!" exclaimed Josephine, startled and astonished; "and who is that, Edith?"

"It is my sister Blanche," she answered.

"What a world of change is this!" replied Josephine.

When she met Blanche, it was with rather a cold, constrained manner, for she could not understand how her brother could have passed by such a noble woman as Edith Clifford, to unite his fate to one so much her inferior as her sister Blanche. When Gerald returned to his home, it was with a hearty welcome that he received his sister, for the two were warmly attached.

"I hope, dear sister, that it is to wander no more," said Gerald.

"I am like a tired pilgrim, Gerald. My visions of woman's independence have never been realized, and I cannot tell you with what delight I have reached this haven of rest."

Josephine's whole deportment was so greatly changed, that Edith could not but hope that the citadel of her unbelief was tottering, and prayed earnestly that God would guide her footsteps yet into the only paths of peace. When Sunday came,

she announced her intention of going with the family to the house of God; and her serious deportment while there inspired Edith with fresh hope and cheered her brother's heart. Wisely they forbore remarks, but committed her case to the Good Shepherd, who could guide her safely home. After Edith's return, Josephine spent much of her time either alone or visiting among the cottages of the poor. Everywhere she saw the marks of Edith's footsteps,—in the parish school which she had instituted, in the lowly dwellings which she had blessed, in the young who loved, and in the aged who revered her name.

"Who gave you these nice books?" said she to a curly-headed child who handed her a chair.

"Miss Edith, ma'am," replied the child.

"You have a fine large Bible," said she to an aged woman in another cottage.

"Miss Edith bought it for me, and a great comfort it is to my old heart."

"What a comfortable chair you have, Ellen," said she to a poor girl who had been a cripple all her life.

"It is, indeed, ma'am. I never could sit with any comfort until Miss Edith sent me this nice chair. O, ma'am, you do not know what a blessing she was when she lived among us."

"We are so glad to see you in our parish school, Miss Fortescue," said the teacher, when she paid her first visit; "we have missed Miss Edith so much, for the lady at the Hall very seldom comes among us."

These visits were preaching loud lessons to Josephine, for nowhere in her old visions of philanthropy had she seen such fruits of humble, holy benevolence, as in the walks of this useful Christian. She had long been weary of her cold morality, and now was ready to believe that must be an excellent system which could produce such results. She set herself diligently and privately to work to examine the claims of Christianity. The foundations of her unbelief were shaken to their very base, but her old obstinate pride was hard to overcome. Long and bitter were her struggles, but once convinced, she

yielded; and when presenting herself at Mr. Berkely's study he said, "I need not say that you are welcome, Miss Fortescue. I have long observed you, my friend. I understand the struggles of your mind, and rejoice to see you here."

"I could stay away no longer, my dear sir. I come as an humble inquirer after truth."

"Are you ready to cast away all doubts?"

"I have parted with them all. I only wish to know my duty. I am ashamed of my former folly, and come to learn what the Lord would have me to do."

With kind Christian fidelity he pointed out the path of life, and committing her case in prayer to God, he felt that he was called to "rejoice with the angels over one sinner that repenteth." With all the energy of her strong nature, she devoted herself to her new pursuits; "old things had passed away and all things had become new."

Determined henceforth to live for God, she threw herself at once into all the means of usefulness which Edith had established; and the neighborhood rejoiced in the ministry of love which she exercised around her daily walks. Something of her old bluntness yet remained, and occasionally it would show itself in her impatience of Blanche's frequent relapses into self-indulgence and indolence.

"She will never raise my brother," said Josephine. "If he had only chosen Edith, what a different man he would have been! But Blanche is nothing but a pretty baby, and he must humor all her foolish whims."

Many were the hours of communion spent together by those two active spirits, and Josephine had gained so many lessons of humility in the school of Christ, that she was generally willing to learn from her friends how to benefit her fellow-creatures. In works of benevolence, both were spending useful, happy lives: the one at Ravenswood, and the other at Hazel Glen. The trials of Edith's youth had greatly improved and elevated her character: the suffering had passed, and left her a cheerful, sunny woman, rejoicing in the happiness which she spread around her.

Letters came regularly from Adele, and breathed of happiness in her new home. We will give an extract:

“DEAREST EDITH: I know that it will rejoice your heart to hear that I am so happy in my new home. My reception was most cordial. Mrs. Percy is a second mother, and Lionel is all that I could desire, and yet not a day passes without the picture of the dear home circle at Hazel Glen rising up before my mind. Mine is a favored lot. All my youthful days surrounded by the best and holiest of influence. Now, in my married life, I am dwelling in the midst of one of the best and happiest of English homes. Clara and May are both affectionate sisters, and I endeavor to aid them in their avocations of usefulness and benevolence.

“When I hear the church-bells ringing around us on Sunday morning, I think of the sweet chimes which are calling the cottagers of Hazel Glen to the little church up Mount Pisgah. Lionel has promised me that I shall visit my own home in a year or two. How delightful it will be once more to tread that familiar path to our rural church. We live in one of the suburbs of London, and my husband goes in daily to his business, returning at five o’clock to dinner.

“How strange it seems to look at that word, husband! For who would have believed that the young man who rescued the little girl at Windermere would have become the beloved partner of her life. But Providence works in a mysterious way, and reality is often more strange than fiction.

“When you write tell me about everything. How father looks, and what he says and does. About dear Lilly, and Emily, and little Frank. How are Ralph and Madge? Gerald and Blanche? I am so glad to hear of the change in Josephine. I doubt not, dearest sister, that you have had much to do with that wondrous transformation.

“I must not forget old nurse and Uncle Peter. Dear, faithful servants, may God bless their old days! And now, dear sister, I have reserved my best news for the last. On Easter Sunday, I purpose, by God’s assistance, to make a

public dedication of myself, with all that I have, and all that I am, to the love and service of my God and Saviour. Then I shall be united to my husband in the best of bonds, for Lionel is a real Christian. Pray for me, dear Edith, that I may be a consistent follower of the meek and lowly Saviour. Is not ours a favored family? All are now partakers of the hopes of the Gospel. Part in heaven, and part on earth we may hope to be united forever, when the toils and trials of life are ended. Lionel sends his love to the dear home circle, and, across the deep ocean, I waft a loving kiss to all. Write fully, and often, to your own

ADELE PERCY."

"How can I ever doubt the faithfulness of my Heavenly Father?" said Edith, as she gratefully perused Adele's letter. "God has been true to his promises. All are gathered now into the Saviour's fold. Let me

'Praise him for all that is past,
And trust him for all that's to come.'

Edith was now busily engaged in erecting a parsonage for her little church, for Mr. Berkely was about to bring home a companion for his earthly pilgrimage, and she was anxious to provide a comfortable home for the young pair. When it was completed, Edith removed the furniture from Aunt Priscilla's house; and, adding some useful articles from her brother's study, and also some few, of a neater kind, to the little parlor, all was in perfect order, and waited the arrival of the youthful occupants. Edith superintended the first meal herself; and, sitting in the pleasant parlor, watched for the young pastor and his wife.

All the Clifford family were present, and so cheerful and home-like did all appear, that the young bride was saved much of that feeling of loneliness which oppresses one in a new and strange home. "Let me take your bonnet, Mrs. Berkely," said Edith. "I am hostess to-night: or, if you prefer it, I will show you to your room." Saying which, she kindly led the young lady to her apartment, and added, when alone, "I am mother now. I have just parted with two of my dear children, and am ready to adopt another."

Raising her eyes, swimming in tears of gratitude, the young wife answered, "You are too kind, dear Miss Clifford, but I thankfully receive it all, for I have just left a dear mother. I am young and inexperienced, and shall need your instruction in my new duties."

A comfortable meal, a cheerful hour of social intercourse, and the first worship around the domestic altar, closed the pleasant evening, and Mrs. Berkely felt as if she had, indeed, found a happy, Christian home, and a kind, sympathizing friend. Madge frequently visited Hazel Glen. Her cheerful, sunny face, her glowing accounts of Ralph's tenderness, towards his little wife, all spoke with peace within. "Indeed Edith, my husband watches me too carefully. He will not let the wind visit me too roughly. And then there is such perfect sympathy between us. He aids me in my literary pursuits, encourages, guides, directs. I do not know what I should do without him."

"How comes on the book, Madge?" asked Edith.

"It is nearly done, sister, and you shall have the first copy; but I am not very sanguine, for there is much difficulty in the way of an authoress."

Two years of useful, happy life, passed for Edith. The parish of St. Paul's the Less rapidly improved. A great change had passed over the whole neighborhood. Cheering letters arrived constantly from Adele. Madge was a devoted happy wife, but Ralph had suffered heavy losses; and what Madge had first attempted, for the purpose of doing good in the world, by the exercise of her talents, was now cheerfully pursued, in her noble efforts to aid her husband in his embarrassments. After a long delay, and many disappointments, her first book was published. Both watched anxiously for notices from the press.

One morning, seated at the breakfast-table, Madge, with a smiling face, held up the newspaper, saying, "Look here, dear!" and Ralph read, with a beaming countenance, a most flattering notice of his wife's book. Rising and throwing her arms around his neck, she said affectionately, with glistening

eyes, "Dear Ralph, I can help you now; what a joy it will be to labor for you?"

"Ah, Madge! you see I was not mistaken: many thought you cold, and selfish, and unfeeling, but I knew that there was a precious gem hidden under the veil of reserve, and I have found it. I had hoped, dearest, that I could have spared a path of flowers for you to walk in, but God has willed it otherwise; and we ought to be thankful that he has endowed us with talents which may help us in the days of our adversity."

"Will it not be pleasant, dear husband, to work together? By-the-by, Ralph, I think that you were very cunning to keep your secret from me so long, when you were writing your own book; but then it was a delightful surprise. Has it not met with some success?"

"It has, dear," answered her husband, "and I am hopeful; but we must be very economical. I have suffered the loss of thousands, by indorsing for a friend; consequently, I am heavily embarrassed. I shall never rest until all my debts are paid."

"Let us move into a smaller house, Ralph," said Madge. "Now I think of it, there is Woodbine Cottage,—I think that it is vacant now. Our rent would be very low there. We can sell all our expensive furniture, and then we shall have so much leisure, and shall be so quiet; besides we can bring up our little George so much better in the country than in a city. We shall have the long winter evenings, when we can write, or review what we have done. The more I think of it, the more delightful it appears. Away from the city, near Ravenswood, nearer Edith, and so much more alone."

"Dear hopeful little wife!" said Ralph, lovingly; and going to the library, he opened a volume of Wordsworth, and read, feelingly:

"I saw her, upon nearer view,
A spirit, yet a woman too!

Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty;
A countenance, in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A creature, not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food—
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

"And now I see, with eye serene,
The very pulse of the machine:
A being, breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveller between life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill:
A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a spirit still, and bright,
With something of an angel light."

And folding Madge fondly in his arms, he said, "And this is what God has given me! Your suggestions are excellent, and we will follow them, dearest."

Accordingly, as soon as convenient, we behold them settled at Woodbine Cottage, a home so hallowed by the remembrance of the beloved ones who once dwelt beneath its humble roof. In the enjoyment of rural life and pleasant congenial occupations, in the exercise of pious submission to God's providence, in the love for each other, Ralph and Madge lived a happier life than they had ever yet enjoyed. Their wants were few, their prospects encouraging. It amused them not a little when they read the curious surmises concerning Madge's book. It was exciting much attention. Who could have written it? It was generally understood that the name of the author was merely a "nomme de plume." Was she an American? Was she English? Why could she not give her real name? The profits now began to come, and the publishers asked for another from the same source.

Edith rejoiced in Madge's success, and feared no evil consequences, now that both husband and wife were engaged

in the same pursuits, and that their maintenance depended upon their success. Accustomed to gather her family always on Christmas, she made preparations for their arrival, expecting the ladies to spend a week with her. Edith was an accomplished cake-maker, and for several days before, was very busy with her preparations for her guests, arranging her gifts for the Christmas-tree, and dressing the house with evergreens.

The day before Christmas was intensely cold. There had been a heavy fall of snow, and the company arrived in sleighs. It was a great treat to the little ones to meet at Aunt Edith's, and Frank had been running out to the piazza all day, to watch for their arrival. Clad in his fur cap and warm overcoat and tippet, frequently he ran down the glen, to see if they were coming; but the keen wind and biting frost drove him back to the glowing fires, to warm his hands and to start on another excursion. At last, with a joyful shout, he exclaimed, "There is Uncle Gerald!" and away he flew, to seize little Mary when she was lifted from the sleigh.

"Don't pull me, Cousin Frank," said the little girl, as the excited boy hurried her into the house.

"Dear, darling aunty, happy Christmas!" said the little creature, as Edith clasped her in her arms, and welcomed heartily her sister and Gerald.

"You must be very cold, Blanche," said Edith, as she took off her wrappings, and rubbed her purple hands. Blanche was very pale, and had a cough which troubled her sister. As soon as possible, she had some light cakes and mulled wine placed before them, and soon made everything wear a cheerful aspect.

"But Blanche, where did that cough come from?" said Edith.

"I took cold, dear, last fall, and I have never been able to get clear of it."

Edith saw that her flesh was wasted, and she appeared weak and dejected. Her fears were greatly awakened when she saw these symptoms.

Little Mary was a lovely child of four years old, full of sprightliness and artless prattle. Frank was merry and sportive, as his father had been at his age. Josephine made one of the party, and added not a little to its cheerfulness.

Soon Ralph, Madge, and little George were among the guests; and old Mr. Clifford was perfectly happy when thus surrounded by his family.

"All we want now is Adele," said he; "but we hope to see her the next year."

It was a happy company that assembled around the family board that evening.

"Shall not little Mary have some of Aunt Edith's sponge-cake?" said Frank.

"Yes, dear," replied her mother; "we never see such sponge-cake anywhere else."

"Nor such delightful coffee, or good buckwheat cakes," said Gerald.

"Nor such a dear sister," said Madge.

"By-the-by, Madge," said Edith, "I think that the good sister of your book was rather overdrawn."

"Indeed," replied Madge, looking archly at Ralph, "I had a model; had I not, husband?"

"Yes, a real living model; such as we seldom, but may sometimes see," answered Ralph.

"Do not blush so, Edith; you must let your sister sometimes draw your likeness," said Madge, "for I tried to give the glory where it all belonged,—to abounding grace."

"How has the book been received, Ralph?" asked Edith.

"In a very flattering manner, indeed I think my little wife will be quite an authoress."

"In my next I shall draw the picture of a Christian husband, and I have a model for that; I need no invention while Ralph Cameron lives."

After tea, the children were indulged with a merry hour of childish sports, and Aunt Edith led the party. "Blind Man's Buff," "Hunt the Slipper," and "Pussy Wants a Corner," filled the room with laughter. Little George, in his father's arms,

crowed and laughed, and clapped his chubby hands in an ecstasy of delight, and grandfather cheered on the game. A basket of apples, and another of nuts, closed the evening; and after the ceremony of hanging up the stockings for the three children, they were dismissed to their slumbers, promising to be up early in the morning to usher in the Christmas festival.

By early dawn, Frank's bare feet were heard patting about the house, saluting every chamber door with his "Happy Christmas!" and by lamp-light the party had assembled around the Christmas tree in the parlor. Brilliantly lighted, with the angel on its topmost bough, it was an object of great joy to the happy children; and when the presents came to be distributed, deep, pure wells of affection were stirred by these love-gifts in the hearts of that happy Christmas household. Little Mary was charmed by her pretty wax doll, Frank scampered about on his new-hobby-horse, and little George loaded his wagon with sugar-plums, and amused himself by drawing it around the room. Some packages from Adele were on the table, for she had contrived to have them at home by Christmas; and old Mr. Clifford was as happy as a child in counting over the gifts from his beloved children.

In the useful, happy lives of her sisters, Madge and Adele, in the peaceful death-beds of Frank and Eveleen, in the prosperity of her little church, in the promising childhood of her sister's children, in the warm love which encircled her on her domestic hearth, in the reverence which she everywhere inspired, and in the cheerful piety which dwelt in her own peaceful bosom, we behold some of the recompense of her early years of trials and sadness; and as we look upon the noble woman, with that cheerful aspect which attracts all hearts within the circle of her influence, we honor the holy spirit of self-sacrifice which resigned the bright hopes of youth for the happiness of living in and for a wider circle than the sweet womanly province of a holy, happy wife; for Edith Clifford had rejected many offers, and deliberately chosen her lot of single blessedness.



CHAPTER XXVII.

WINTER BLASTS AROUND OAK HALL.



PALE face, a hectic flush, and warning cough, haunted Edith whenever she thought of her sister Blanche. Notes came to her more frequently than usual, but they all told of ill health and sadness, and called for sympathy and advice: and the faithful friend was with her declining sister as much as other cares would allow. Gerald

was alarmed. The best advice was called in, and all that human skill could devise was done to arrest the progress of disease; but the sentence had gone forth, and, step by step, she faded from the sight of those who loved her.

Mr. Berkely, perceiving her condition, was the faithful pastor and friend who gradually prepared her mind for the last great change. By frequent visits, earnest prayers, and suitable books, he ministered to the young wife, and directed her thoughts to another and a better world. Gerald was untiring. All that human love could do to smoothe the passage to the tomb was freely bestowed. Josephine, under the influence of her new principles, was the tender, affectionate nurse. Little Mary sported around her dying mother, and caused her many a secret pang as she thought of leaving her in the wide world; but that grief was greatly mitigated when she thought of her sister Edith, who had been a faithful

mother to so many, and who, she knew, would cherish her child.

Time wore on. The severity of the weather prevented Blanche from breathing the air out of doors, and she was now confined to two rooms. It was manifest to all that the snow-drop and crocus would bloom upon her grave, and that early spring birds would sing her requiem.

Nearer and nearer drew the messenger from heaven. At last she whispered to Gerald, "Send for Edith, I cannot do without her now. It will not be long, dear, that I shall need her."

The messenger was despatched, and she set out alone, to go to her dying sister. It was a dreary winter night when she came in sight of Ravenswood. Not a human being was anywhere to be seen. The keen blasts whistled around the old elms, swaying their branches in the frosty air, which seemed to Edith's imagination full of the sighs of mournful spirits. Past the old elm, in sight of the dear home of her childhood, soon the grand oaks of her sister's residence appeared in sight, and through the leafless branches she perceived the light burning in the sick-room.

She was received with a sad welcome by Gerald. "You will not leave her again, Edith," said he, "until she has passed the dark valley, and is safe at home." Perceiving her trunk, it was a sufficient answer to his request.

Passing sadly up the staircase, a few moments brought her to the side of Blanche, who, propped up by pillows, drew her down to kiss her, saying, "I knew, dear, that you would come. You will not leave me again, Edith, will you?"

"No, dearest; I have made arrangements at home to provide for my absence."

Nothing could be more touching than the appearance of the beautiful creature, who seemed panting beneath the wasting of consumption. Her eyes, always remarkable for their melting tenderness, now, under the languor of disease, penetrated the beholder with their sweetness, rendered still more lovely by the hectic flush which bloomed upon her countenance. The soft,

brown hair, gathered up under a simple lace cap, which was untied to aid her breathing, shaded her marble forehead, and escaped in waving curls behind the ear, and down the slender neck.

Taking Edith's hand, Blanche whispered, faintly, "Sister, it was kind to come; but when were you aught else? It is a gloomy night, dearest. How the wind whistles around the Hall."

"Yes, Blanche, it is cold and dreary, out of doors, but I trust that the light and warmth of Christian hope is here."

"I have a great deal to say, dear sister, and while I have strength, I must tell you all," said Blanche.

"Do not tire yourself too much. Would it not be better in the daytime?" replied her sister.

"No, Edith, it would relieve me, and I should sleep better. I was at first very unwilling to think of death, for I have a great deal to leave; an affectionate husband, a sweet child, a pleasant home, and so many dear friends; and then I have been so unfaithful to my Christian vows, so worldly, so vain, so selfish. I felt afraid to meet my offended God; but, dear sister, I have truly repented of all. I have cast all my cares and sins on Jesus, and now I have peace, perfect peace in him. Gerald will grieve, at first, but he will not miss me much, for I was not the one to make him happy; and yet he has always been so kind, so considerate, I have nothing to complain of; but I have heard him sigh, when I have returned from those gay parties, and I have seen him so disappointed, when I showed no interest in his beautiful pictures."

"Do not reproach yourself now, Blanche; that is long past, and you have been a loving wife since then," said Edith.

"Yes, loving, Edith, but not strong," she replied, smiling sadly; "and that is what Gerald needs,—a wise, judicious, faithful friend, in his wife; that is what you are, Edith, and he would have been a happier man with his early love; but I never planned to wean him from you, and many an hour since have I experienced my unfitness to be his wife."

"Do not talk so, dear Blanche,—these are vain regrets, unprofitable to us both; let your thoughts dwell upon the future, upon the blessed world to which you are so rapidly hastening: there we shall know the reasons for all the sorrows and disappointments of this mortal state, and will, doubtless, bless God for all."

"Kiss me, sister, ere I sleep; and pray, dearest, that I may be sustained throughout all this last trial of my pilgrimage."

Edith folded the wasted form in a warm embrace, pressed a kiss upon the sweet lips, and, bowing down, poured out a heart-warm prayer for her dying sister. She lay down by her side, and Blanche slept sweetly, pillowed on her sister's bosom. Week by week, day by day, hour by hour, she faded away, so silently, so peacefully, that the last hour came when it was not expected.

It was early in March, when the little robins began to peck against her window, and to warble their sweet carols around the old oak trees, that Edith brought in a few of the earliest spring-flowers, and placed them on a little table near her bed. She smiled, as she looked upon them, and said, "They are the last that I shall see of earth. I shall soon be where flowers of Paradise bloom perpetually."

"It is a blessed hope, Blanche; what would become of us, without this sweet assurance?" said Edith.

"Will you call Gerald, sister? I want to see him," added Blanche; and summoned to her bed-side, he was soon in her room.

"Come near me, dear husband," said Blanche, while the death-dews stood upon her forehead. "I want to thank you, Gerald, for all your tenderness, your kind forbearance towards your weak young wife. Never, by word or deed, have you failed me. You should have had a stronger mind, a firmer character, than mine, but no want of love on your part has ever made me feel it. And now I am going, Gerald, to my mother, to my brother, to Eveleen, to my precious Saviour; follow me there, dearest husband. I want my sister to educate my little Mary. She has been a faithful mother to us all, and

she will love and cherish my child. I know that Josephine would be kind to her, but Edith will be wiser."

"Your requests, dearest, shall be faithfully observed. I agree entirely with you concerning our child. Edith is the proper person to train her," answered Gerald.

Ere the bloom of the snowdrop and crocus were over, Blanche Clifford passed from earth, and "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," was solemnly pronounced over the still lovely remains of Gerald's youthful wife, as they laid her away to await the rising morn. "And did Gerald mourn?" He did, faithfully, truly, for the one sleeping in the silent grave, but he did not miss the companionship, as he would have missed the society of a stronger, nobler wife.

It grieved him to part with his little Mary, but his promise to his dying Blanche was faithfully kept, and Edith returned to Hazel Glen with another dear child, to train for usefulness and heaven. Josephine was now a kind and faithful friend to her brother, and in her devotion to the cause of God was a great blessing to the neighborhood of Ravenswood. The trials of life had recalled Gerald to his God and Saviour; and in the active duties of a Christian, and in renewed attention to his profession, he sought and found the comfort which he needed.

His little Mary drew him frequently to Hazel Glen, where he saw Edith, in all the dignity of womanhood, presiding over her family, sustaining her father, training her little charge, cheering and blessing her sisters, and everywhere exercising her benevolent and pious spirit. Having nothing now to detain him in America, Gerald prepared to leave his home, to stay a couple of years on the continent, in order to study his art and pursue his profession; but before leaving he secured faithful likenesses of the family, intending to make some important use of them while abroad. Committing his child affectionately to Edith's care, he set sail for Europe, promising to see Adele before he visited the continent.

After a prosperous voyage, he arrived in England, and hastened to the residence of the Percys. His meeting with

Adele was sad one, for the sisters had tenderly loved each other, and the sight of Gerald's sad pale face and mourning garb spoke of the dear departed.

The kind sympathy of the family in that peaceful Christian home was a healing balm to his sorrowing spirit, and the sight of Adele's domestic happiness with her husband and little Edith, filled his heart with grateful sympathy, as he thought of the good tidings which he could send to Hazel Glen. After visiting some of the charming rural scenery of England, he turned his face to the continent, and rambled from place to place, sketching the romantic scenery of Switzerland, and travelling on to the splendend Pyrenees, where, years before, he had spent so many happy hours with Edith, in the days of their early betrothal. She was no longer young, nor was Gerald, and yet the image of the past that most frequently haunted his memory was Edith, and not Blanche, the fascination of whose beauty had passed away; but the conversations of those early days, the deep devotion of Edith's spirit, returned to him now, in his middle life; and, when he needed a friend, a sympathizer, he deeply felt what he had lost.

In all his studies, surrounded by his pictures, his mind was constantly reverting to Edith, and longing for her approval. He was busily engaged in planning three great pictures, which he expected to be the work of years, and on which he was bestowing all the powers of his genius. He heard constantly from Hazel Glen, and the news of his little daughter's health, beauty, and sprightliness, made him often long for a sight of his sweet Mary. Gerald's character was ripening, under the influence of his trials, and in all his journeying he sought the society of the excellent. The power of early Christian influence returned. The world had lost its charms, and things unseen and eternal exercised a controlling influence over his daily life. The nearer his heart drew to God, the more did thoughts of Edith and her goodness fill his memory.

Two years he remained abroad. Without notifying his friends, suddenly he resolved to visit America, and set sail as soon as possible, having closed his studio ere he left Florence,

which had been his last stopping-place. A short voyage brought him to New York, and with the least possible delay, after stopping at Ravenswood to see his sister, he hastened on to Hazel Glen. It was an evening late in autumn when he came in sight of the house. He halted awhile before the window of the family-room to view the picture within. The room was cheerfully lighted. The fire burned briskly in the burnished grate. Old Mr. Clifford was seated in a large chair on one side of a large table, and seemed to be talking pleasantly to Frank, who, though a large boy, sat on his grandfather's knee. Little Mary, his darling child, was seated on Aunt Edith's lap, who seemed to be affectionately caressing the little girl. Many silver hairs had been added to Mr. Clifford's head, but time had dealt very lightly with Edith. Her figure had grown fuller, but had lost none of its dignity; her eyes were just as lovely as in early youth, and her mouth no longer wore the old expression of pride, but a sweet, happy smile dwelt upon her face as she talked to her little niece. Blind Lilly sat among the group, with a calm, serene aspect, and Emily was seated at the piano, playing. Gerald's heart was full, as he looked at the family group, and in a moment he was in their midst.

"There is dear papa, Mary," said Edith, as she gave the child into his arms.

Clasping her in a warm embrace, the father pressed loving kisses on her soft cheek, saying, "How much she has grown, Edith! How I have longed to see my darling child!"

"She has not forgotten her father, Gerald," answered Edith, "for in her daily prayers you have always been remembered, and in all her childish lessons she has always been taught to refer to you; she can read now, and is occupied daily in the school-room with our dear Miss Arnold."

"She is a privileged child, Edith, with such an aunt and governess," said Gerald, with a warm glow of gratitude upon his face.

"How are Ralph and Madge?" inquired Gerald.

"They are well, and living happily at Woodbine Cottage. Ralph is a successful author, and Madge is helping him nobly; you could not find a happier circle than the one dwelling in that sweet, humble home. But how long since you have seen Adele?" inquired Edith.

"I spent a week with the Percys on my return home, when waiting for the steamer, and I was quite charmed with all that I saw there of a happy English household. Adele is a happy wife and mother; she expects to visit home in the spring," answered Gerald.

Seated around the breakfast-table, next morning, Gerald said, smilingly, to little Mary, "I have something to show you, daughter, that I think will please you."

Clapping her little hands, she said, "O, show me now, dear papa, I cannot wait."

"Guess what I have brought you, Mary," replied her father: "it is in that box on the side-table."

"What can it be, I wonder?" said the excited child; and there was no more breakfast eaten by the little girl on that morning.

As soon as the meal was ended, Gerald opened the box, and to Mary's infinite delight, there lay a beautiful London doll, which she had so long desired, which could open and shut its eyes, and several suits of handsome clothes. She flew to her father, and throwing her arms around his neck, she said, "Thank you, dear papa, you are so good;" and whispering in his ear, she added, "You have not forgotten Cousin Frank, have you, dear papa?"

"No, indeed;" and opening a small box, he drew out a very fine watch, which he presented to the delighted boy.

"How did you know, uncle, that I wanted a watch, above all things?"

"Why, my boy, I remembered what I wished for at your age. I have some very choice books also for you," answered his uncle.

"Now, I have something for your aunt," said Gerald; and opening a small case, the bright face of little Edith Percy

smiled upon her. "This is from Adele, and is a perfect likeness," continued he. Opening another, a set of fine mosaics appeared, which he had purchased in Rome, and a lovely picture of Blanche, set in jet. "Will you accept these, Edith?" said Gerald; "they express but little of the gratitude which I feel for the kind, motherly care you have extended towards my darling Mary.,'

Gerald lengthened his stay at Hazel Glen; it was yet a charmed circle to the weary exile. Deeply interested in Edith's pursuits, he looked upon the work which she had accomplished with peculiar emotions. All around him were objects which spoke of the noble woman who once might have been his. If he raised his eyes to Mount Pisgah, there stood the humble church built by her benevolence; if he looked a short distance up the glen, there, embowered in shady trees, smiled the pretty rural parsonage which she had provided; if he walked out in the morning among the cottagers, her praises were in every mouth; if, in the evenings, he sometimes visited the homes of the rich, Edith Clifford's holy life and pure devotion dwelt upon every tongue; and all ranks and classes rose up to do her honor.

But it was time that he should return to Oak Hall, he was needed there, and though his heart lingered at Hazel Glen, he made ready for his departure. Late on one winter evening he started for his home. He was alone. Bitter memories stirred within his bosom. The cold winter moon revealed the gloominess of the landscape; the leafless trees were rocked to and fro by keen, biting blasts, and no sounds were heard around him but the hollow winds moaning drearily through the forest. From some mysterious power of association, one glance at that winter moon brought back the days of early buoyant youth. He stood again with Edith on the piazza, at Ravenswood, when he had appointed the early morning ride, ere he went to college. He recalled the blessed evening when, under the glowing sunset, he first revealed his own, and listened to the artless story of her love. He saw again the rosy blush and the happy smile that lit up her lofty countenance.

Farther on, he was again at the communion table, where, together, they knelt at the table of the Lord. Then followed the remembrance of her purity and love, to mock him with visions of departed happiness. A long blank ensued. Then came the memory of Blanche, on that day when the picture on the balcony first charmed his wandering fancy; then the years of blushing, lovely girlhood, and the fascinating creature who stole his weak heart from his noble Edith. The scene on the Hudson was acted over again. A pang of remorse shot through his bosom, as he remembered his cruel neglect, in that hour of mortal agony. Then came, like stinging scorpions, the recollection of that morning, when Edith placed the ring of betrothal on the finger of Blanche, and almost sank beneath the trial. Then followed his short married life, the disappointments of that union, and the early grave which opened to receive the young wife. Then rose the picture again of Edith's sisterly love, her glowing piety, her returning cheerfulness, the footsteps of her heavenly benevolence, and her blessed household at Hazel Glen; and as he thought of the desolate hearth to which he was hastening, the love of his early years returned, and he longed once more for the pure devoted heart, which had loved him so fondly in the days of "auld lang syne."

He stood a moment upon the piazza ere he entered his home, and as he glanced once more towards dear old Ravenswood, now the home of strangers, the remembrance of that old elm tree returned with all its soul-subduing memories, and the low wailings of the wintry blasts sighed a sad requiem over his buried hopes; not so sorrowful, however, as the deep sigh which heaved his bosom as he entered his dreary home.

Josephine welcomed him warmly, but she saw that bitter memories were busy in his heart, and she endeavored, as much as possible, to cheer her brother. He sympathized with his sister in all her plans of benevolence, exerted his influence, contributed his money, and "let his light shine among men," glorifying his Father in heaven. But his thoughts travelled more frequently towards Edith than to the silent grave of

Blanche, and he began to wonder how he ever could have been fascinated by the mere charms of her girlish beauty, when contrasted with the noble loveliness of Edith.

The veil had fallen. The mists of passion had vanished, and in the clear light of a purified nature, the image of his early love returned, to set up her reign in his heart with a purer, deeper, holier affection. His visits were frequent at Hazel Glen, and occasionally Edith and little Mary visited Miss Fortescue at Oak Hall. They were warm friends now, for Josephine had learned to venerate the character of her model of Christian excellence, and depended upon Edith's advice in all her plans for the good of her neighborhood; and it made Edith very happy to hear the praises of Gerald and his sister in the cottages of the humble and poor.

Gerald always seemed happier when Edith was a guest at his table, and he ever paid to her that deferential respect which he considered her due. Late one afternoon they had been walking together in some of their accustomed places of resort, for Edith was fond of out-door exercise, even in winter. They had been conversing upon the charming scenery of Europe, and Gerald had been recalling many lovely pictures among the Pyrenees. Unconsciously to Edith, they strayed on until she found herself again with Gerald near the old elm tree.

"Let us be seated awhile," said he. And again they sat under the same tree, which had witnessed so much of joy and grief in their early days.

"What a changing world is this!" said Gerald. "Twenty years ago, dear Edith, we sat here in the days of our youth. Do you remember the sunset hour when we were both so happy?"

"Do not pain me, Gerald, by those recollections. Their memory is vanishing. Their bitterness has all passed, and it would be better for us both to forget them entirely."

"I have a reason, my dear friend, for recalling their memory; they were the brightest, dearest, holiest hours of my life. O that they could be renewed again! I have seen much of the world; many of its loveliest and purest women; but my heart turns back to Edith Clifford, as my beau ideal of

woman as she should be; and could I but hope to regain what I have forfeited so madly, I should be the happiest of men."

Edith's lips quivered as she listened to Gerald, and her dark eyes filled with tears as she replied, "Do not awaken those sad memories, Gerald: it is a buried affection; do not rudely disturb its ashes."

"And why should it be forever buried, Edith? I was once misled and captivated by mere beauty; but now my heart returns to its allegiance, and I love you with a deeper, purer, more enduring love, than I have ever felt before for woman."

"Do not distress me by these professions, Gerald," replied Edith. "My choice is made; my lot is appointed. Once I loved you with all a woman's holy devotion; but I was mistaken. It was not Gerald Fortescue, as he really was, but an imaginary being, whom I loved so fondly. I was disappointed. Love died, and friendship for my sister's husband took its place. I rejoiced in your prosperity. I believe that we shall dwell together in a higher, holier world; but on earth I can love no more. We are both declining in life now, Gerald. See, here are a few silver hairs mingling with my locks, and warning me of the lengthening on the dial-plate of time. Let us be friends, Christian friends, Gerald, aiding each other in all holy deeds, and preparing for that world 'where there is neither marrying, or giving in marriage.'"

Gerald Fortescue bowed his head and wept, in sorrow more bitter than when he looked upon the beautiful remains of his youthful wife. It was a sad trial to Edith to see a man weep so bitterly.

"I cannot stay here, Edith, if you cast me off," replied Gerald. "My heart has been gradually returning to its early love, and I had hoped that the declining portion of our life would have been spent together. But it is so. I deserve this for my weakness. Even to be your friend, Edith, is a high honor, but to be your husband, would have been too much of earthly happiness. I will return to Europe, and devoting myself to my profession, and the duties of a useful Christian, I will seek for the peace which I have lost."

"And now, Gerald," said Edith, as she laid her hand upon the thin locks of his bowed head, "may God ever bless, defend, and keep you. May he pour into your heart the balm of heavenly consolation, and bring you home to his everlasting kingdom."

"How different, Edith, is this hour," said Gerald, "from that which, twenty years ago, we passed under this old tree, when the glory of that very sunset was in harmony with the dreams of happiness in which we then indulged. Listen now, Edith, to the howling of the wintry blasts. Watch the cold dark sky, in which there shines no cheering stars, and you have a faint picture of the desolation which reigns within my bosom."

"Do not say so, Gerald," replied Edith. "There should be no such feelings in a Christian's heart. God wills that you shall serve him in another sphere from that which you would choose; and there is always blessedness in his service. My duty is plain before me. An aged, dependent father, two dear orphan children, a blind, youthful sister, and a whole neighborhood, claim my services; and, Gerald, it has made me happy to bless them. My saddest days were my youthful ones. Riper years have brought me the real sunshine of my life. When seeing others happy, and looking forward 'to the rest which remaineth for the people of God,' I enjoy constant blessedness."

"Noble woman!" said Gerald, "I will try to imitate your piety. But, Edith, remember what I have always said, that you were ever above me; and whenever you approach me, I feel like one looking up from the foot of a lofty hill, where I am lowly and depressed, to the summit, where you stand smiling and serene, beckoning me onward."

"And will you not come, Gerald," replied Edith, "and seek for higher and holier attainments?"

"I will try, my friend, and you must be my helper."

Slowly they returned to the house. Edith mourned over Gerald's disappointment; but, convinced that she was in the path of duty, she was at peace. In a few more weeks,

Gerald came to Hazel Glen to say farewell to the beloved inmates. It was a sad parting; for there was no hope in the future for this life, as Gerald then thought. But Edith knew better; for as she believed him now to be a real Christian, she knew that blessedness always follows the faithful performance of duty.

The winter wore away. Edith was busy as ever in her daily life of usefulness and peace. Lilly aided her in all gentle offices of love. Emily was a neat little assistant in housekeeping. Frank bid fair to be a bright, intelligent boy, and little Mary was a sweet, affectionate child. Surrounded by those beloved ones, Edith's was a blessed household, where angels kept watch and Jesus daily dwelt. Early in the spring, Adele, her husband, and little Edith, paid a visit to the home of her childhood. Adele's natural joyousness, subdued and softened by Christian principle, made her an exceedingly lovely and interesting companion. Lionel was very proud of his lovely wife and child. And when Ralph, Madge, and her little George were added to the family group, Edith was completely happy. Madge had published another book, which established her fame, although still writing under a fictitious name.

"Really, Madge," said Adele, "where do you find your model husbands?"

"I did not have to go far from home," replied Madge, as she looked affectionately upon her husband. "Ralph is my model; only I fear that I have not done him justice."

"We have been highly favored," replied Adele; "for I do not think two such husbands could be found as ours. Really, Edith, when you see our domestic felicity, I wonder that you are not tempted to follow our example."

"I have my calling, Adele. It rejoices my heart to see you happy, and I accept cheerfully the lot which my Heavenly Father has appointed. I have a sweet home circle, which I love, and to whose comfort and happiness I am necessary. I have never yet regretted my youthful vow to my dying mother. It has brought blessings to many, and I desire to thank God for grace to fulfil it."

The seeds of piety which her young hand had sown, watered by bitter tears, had produced the ripe fruits of autumn. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." The ripened harvest of holiness which appeared so richly in Edith's character needed not only the early sowing of the seed, but the breaking of the fallow ground by the rough ploughshare; not only the sunshine and the dew, but also the rain from heaven, and the dark winter nights, when its heavy snows spread a white sheet over the young grain.

All of this beneficent process had been carefully conducted and watched in the heart of Edith Clifford by the wise Husbandman, and now appeared, hanging in heavy clusters on the branches of her daily life, the rich returns of autumn fruits, as from year to year the mortal tended slowly to dissolution, while the spiritual immortal germ daily expanded, until, made perfect, it would bloom hereafter in the Paradise above.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

EVENING.



HE summer storm has its errand of mercy, in the pure atmosphere which it opens around us; as, also, the rough ploughshare, breaking and crumbling the soil, in the harvests which follow; the darkness of night its end, in the rosy streaks which harbinger the rising day; and the stormy waves, which often agitate the bosom of the peaceful river, are followed by the calm flow of a gentle stream, as it seeks the bosom of the mighty ocean. Edith's bark had sailed but for a little while upon the smooth stream of youth, where flowers bloom upon its smiling banks, and the bright sunshine illumines every object; for, over noisy rapids, she had plunged, as it were, suddenly, into the deeper stream of life, where she had buffeted many storms and encountered many rocks and shoals; now, at forty-five, she had reached more quiet waters; her bark sailed smoothly and happily on; the sunlight of heaven, and not of earth, shone around her path, revealing in the distant clouds the palace in the skies whither her feet were surely tending. Some blossoms of earth smiled around her; for, surrounded by her sisters and their sweet children, her warm affections sent out their tendrils and clasped them in one loving embrace; and richly had she been repaid.

Nearly forty-five! A most dreaded, fearful period, to

that woman, who, failing to gather around her those natural ties which the heart seeks, makes no circle of love in which she moves. Not so with Edith Clifford. She had nearly reached the evening of life: but who ever thought of attaching the odium of "old maid" to her honored name? Blessed with excellent health, she looked ten years younger than she really was; her noble figure was one of matchless symmetry, her countenance wore an expression of cheerful serenity, her fine eyes beamed with intellect and love, her rich dark hair, but slightly streaked with silver threads, lay folded around her noble head.

Clad, generally, in her favorite garb of black, or gray silk, she could never enter a room without the question being passed around, "Who is that noble-looking woman?" If among the better classes, the answer would frequently be, "It is Edith Clifford, the guardian spirit of Hazel Glen;" or, if among the poor, the tearful grateful answer, was, often, "It is Miss Edith, the friend of the poor and helpless."

"She is an 'old maid,' is she not?" was sometimes the inquiry.

"She has never married; but if you call her 'old maid' in derision, you are speaking to the wrong person," was ever the response of her friends.

Amidst the universal respect and love of the inhabitants of her little province, she exercised an influence that gave her entire control of the families who loved her.

Her father is now seventy-five; his hair is silvered and his step infirm, but he leans upon his daughter with a loving independence, and he returns sweet, reverential care and affection. Daily growing in grace, which he traces all back to her holy example, his feet are tending to the tomb, but upon his hoary head is that crown of glory which the righteous wear. Often, in the twilight hours, he talks about his Mary, and the loved ones who have gone before him, and looks forward, with unwavering hope, to his home in heaven.

Old nurse is dead; long since gathered home to the rest of those who sleep in Jesus. Miss Arnold is advanced in years, but still teaches the children of the household; for Edith must have her beloved governess near her. Hers is a green old age, for her home is a happy one, and she has never known anything of the bitterness of servitude in that Christian family.

The church upon Mount Pisgah is still the resting-place for the weary pilgrims of Hazel Glen. It has prepared many saints for glory; and amid its shaded churchyard sleep many, who shall awake to bless the gentle ministry which planted the little sanctuary on the hill-top of their earthly home.

The good pastor is still among them. He is identified as the spiritual father of many; and loving his humble country parish, he never thinks of change. He has received scores into the flocks of the Redeemer, and he hopes yet to welcome their children to the table of the Lord; and, as he listens, Sunday after Sunday, to the church-bells, which call him to his holy labors, he trusts that the same bell will toll for his departure, when his work on earth is done.

Forty-five! Edith looked forward to her birthday with calm, happy feelings. She felt a longing desire to see all her beloved ones together once more beneath her own roof, and had conceived the idea of a family tryst on the approaching day.

Gerald had returned twice to America since he had parted with Edith so sadly. He was now a great artist, and had lately announced his intention of returning to Oak Hall, to wander no more.

Adele, now a happy Christian wife, with three children, had experienced some of life's vicissitudes, for she had parted with two of her darlings, and laid them to sleep in the family vault of the Percys, beneath the care of the Redeemer.

Madge, still at Woodbine Cottage, as a home of choice, for the summer season, was now the mother of two lovely

children, George and Blanche; and, although two sweet infants slept beneath the sod, she was a happy, useful Christian. Writing to all the families in time, Edith summoned them to celebrate her birthday, in the beautiful month of October.

Gerald arrived first. Now in the very prime of his days, he presented rather an imposing appearance. His form was fine; he had parted with some of the soft brown locks which once lay upon his beautiful forehead,—now gleaming, in its purity, above eyes which had lost much of the dreamy look of early youth, and was now replaced by an expression of earnest thought, beaming out of their dark blue depths. A sad, sweet smile played around his mouth, which spoke of suffering. Gerald had returned greatly improved; in all that was good and elevating, he took a deep interest; and Edith, and his sister, both hailed his presence as a strong support in their works of benevolence.

Lionel, Adele, and her young family, followed: Edith, a young girl of thirteen, Lionel, a boy of eleven, and little Madge, a child of four, composed her household circle. She was no longer young; the ripened years of middle life adorned her character, and her trials had subdued all its impulsiveness, and made her a faithful mother to her children.

It was now the lovely month of October, when Hazel Glen appeared in all the beauty of the season in America. The skies wore no more the misty haze of a summer sun. All along the shady glen the trees were clad in the gorgeous colors of autumn. The little church assumed a look of brighter loveliness, as it stood embowered in its green, crimson, and yellow hues. The squirrel sported with more active gambols among the forest trees, and the birds were still singing their sweet carols among the trees of the glen, ere they took their departure for warmer climes. The family party were seated on the piazza, watching for the arrival of Madge and her family, whom they expected on the evening before Edith's birthday. Gerald was admiring

the beauties of one of the most splendid sunsets which our country affords. From the piazza, there was a full view of the glorious clouds, which, in masses of every shape and tint, glowed over the whole landscape. While they stood watching the changing clouds, the well-known carriage approached, and George and Blanche waved their hands out of the windows, and bowed and smiled to the party on the piazza.

"There is dear Aunt Edith," said little Blanche; "is she not a sweet, good aunty, mamma?"

"Yes, my love; there are few so lovely as she," replied her mother.

By this time they had reached the house. They soon dismounted, and were received with open arms by the dear family group. Edith looked around her with a bright, joyous smile and said, "How many are left of those we love!"

"Really, Edith," said Madge, "I cannot realize that this is your forty-fifth birthday; you are so bright and blooming yet, so joyous and sunny, that I cannot look upon you as in the decline of life."

"Well, Madge, I cannot see how I shall ever grow old. I live so much in my dear family, that I am constantly renewing my youth in these beloved children."

"By-the-by, Edith, have you seen Ralph's last book?" said Madge; "it has received many encomiums, and is about to be republished in England. My dear husband is quite a famous author, now."

"And my little wife, too," said Ralph, fondly; "her books are exercising a sweet and holy influence in many a household circle; and around the fireside of our country, the morals of 'Margaret Crawford' are everywhere quoted."

Edith smiled as she replied, "And this famous authoress is what was preparing in the lonely garret of Ravenswood, where our odd little Madge used to hide herself with her favorite Shakespeare."

Tears started in Madge's beautiful eyes as she replied, "I have learned lessons concerning the treatment of such children, from dear Ralph. Often, when I was called cross, I

was only sad; and if God had not sent me such a friend, I might never have lived in the sweet sunshine of a loving home. I see the same shy traits in Bianche. We are watching her carefully, and trying to guide these eccentricities."

"Can you guess, Edith," said Ralph, "whom I met the other day, in a book store, in New York? None other than your old lover, Mr. Percival. He is greatly changed, has never married, and has endured great hardships in his missionary life. He looks quite old, and inquired after you most kindly."

"Aha! aunty," said Mary Fortescue, a young girl of sixteen; "I have often wondered why Aunt Edith never married, for I know that she must have had many offers; how was it, aunty?"

A blush passed over her mild countenance as she replied, "God had other work for me, dear. What would have become of grandpa, Aunt Lilly, and my orphan nephew and niece, if I had forsaken them?"

"And so many others, dear aunt," said Frank, "of those who live on your bounty, and rejoice in your goodness. I don't know what I shall do without my good aunt, when I go to the great city."

Frank was now twenty-one, and strongly resembled his father. He was soon to take his place on the theatre of human life, in the metropolis of the Union. Emily was lately married, and was also to live in New York, so that Edith's household would be narrowed down to a small circle.

On the following day was the period when her birthday was to be celebrated, and the great pictures, the work of Gerald's genius, first to be seen. Josephine Fortescue and the good pastor's family were invited to join the family circle. Edith, in a handsome dress of black satin, Madge, Adele, and Emily, in rather more fanciful attire, to please their liege lords, gathered around the hospitable board, where a bountiful repast was provided, and Aunt Edith's pies, cakes, jellies, and autumn fruits, received abundant praise. After dinner, the party assembled in the large parlor, to examine the pictures. They

were covered with curtains, and when Gerald drew aside the first, all stood in affecting silence, for the elder members of the family understood its full meaning.

It was called "The Sister's Vow," and represented a young girl kneeling by the bed of a dying mother; the face of the former was turned upwards, with an expression of pure and lofty purpose; the mother's hand was laid in blessing on her head, while a sweet smile rested upon the dying features. The upper part of the picture represented an open roof, above which floated fleecy clouds, with smiling angels bending over the departing saint, ready to receive her spirit. The faces were not to be mistaken; all, with choking voices and tearful eyes, recognized Mrs. Clifford, and her daughter Edith in the bloom of early youth. But little was said. A few whispered, "How beautiful!" But that was all,—their hearts were too full for speech.

The second curtain was removed, and another, entitled "The Sister's Sacrifice," was disclosed. Blanche in all her glorious beauty, stands by the side of Gerald, in her wedding dress. The expression of her face is not altogether that of a happy bride, for her eyes are cast down, with an expression more of sadness than timidity. Edith, with eyes uplifted, stands by his side, with one hand pressed to her heart, the other holds the ring, which she is about to hand to Gerald. Her gaze is upward, fixed upon a glittering crown, which is faintly seen, through the misty clouds, in the hands of angels, one of which resembles the lovely face of Mrs. Clifford. Edith appears to be trampling upon an image of herself, which, with face upturned, lies beneath her feet, accompanied by other misty faces, with an imploring expression, representing the temptations which she has overcome. The expression of her lofty countenance tells its own story. Not one could speak, save young Mary Fortescue; and the tribute of perfect silence was more eloquent than words. Mary whispered to her aunt Madge, "Is that lovely creature my mother? Why is Aunt Edith there? What is she trampling under her feet? What does the picture mean?"

"Do not ask now, Mary; it has a sorrowful history," replied her aunt.

Another curtain removed, disclosed the third, called "The Sister's Recompense," which represented a family scene of a bright cheerful character. Edith, in the bloom of mature womanhood, in her favorite dress of black satin, with a brighter, happier face than she had ever worn in the days of her youth, stood, surrounded by her family; her aged father, holding her hand, looks upon her with affectionate reverence; her blind sister, on the other side, is leaning fondly upon her; Frank and Mary, two blooming youths, are seated at her feet, and old Uncle Peter is represented as advancing with a package of letters from the absent ones. The window is open, looking out upon a sylvan scene. On the summit of Mount Pisgah is observed the little church, with groups of persons wending their way up the hills and over the distant fields to the house of God. In the beautiful clouds above are seen the faces of angels, among whom we trace a shadowy resemblance to the mother, Frank, Eveleen, and Blanche. Edith had retired for a few moments, almost overpowered by these vivid pictures of the trials of her life, and those who remained could scarcely express all their admiration of these beautiful productions. They were to remain awhile at Hazel Glen, and then carried to New York for exhibition, their beauty to be admired, but their history only known to the family circle at the Glen.

The day passed delightfully, for the joyous spirits of the younger portion soon dissipated the appearance of sadness. The weather was yet so balmy that the young people enjoyed out-door sports; and up the hill-side, down the glen, and through the woods, might be heard the merry shout and laugh for most of the day. Towards evening, they returned to the house, the little girls crowned with wild autumn flowers, and the boys with hats full of nuts, gathered from the trees of the forest. In the evening, Edith received from each dear relative some valuable gift, expressive of their love; and the cottagers, who had heard of the celebration, had sent their contribution of a handsome Family Bible, and the little children a

Prayer Book, for "dear Miss Edith," which they gratefully offered for her acceptance. A few more weeks, and Adele turned her face homewards; but, ere parting, another gathering of the family met at the Glen. After evening prayer, they sang, to Lilly's sweet music, the following tender, appropriate melody :

" When shall we all meet again?
When shall we all meet again?
Oft shall glowing hope expire,
Oft shall wearied love retire,
Oft shall death and sorrow reign,
Ere we all shall meet again.

" Though in distant lands we sigh,
Parched beneath a hostile sky,
Though the deep between us rolls
Friendship shall unite our souls;
Still in fancy's rich domain,
Oft shall we all meet again.

" When the dreams of life are fled,
When its wasted lamps are dead;
When in cold oblivion's shade,
Beauty, power, and fame are laid;
Where immortal spirits reign,
There shall we all meet again."

Forty-five! Edith is now approaching the evening of life; and here we leave her. She has dignified the state of single life; let readers, who may be contemplating the probabilities of the same state, never allow themselves, for the mere weak terror of the title of "an old maid," to take upon them the solemn duties of a wife, for any other reason than that of pure and holy love; and let none weakly despise the state of maidenhood, who witness the self-denying lives of so many useful, holy women.

Perhaps, it has often been asked, why such numbers of pure and noble females have remained in the lonely state of single blessedness, when so many of the vain and frivolous have taken upon themselves the high and holy duties of married life?

To this it may be replied: Providence has wisely willed it so. Often by a succession of suffering, of which the world dreams not; sometimes, from wronged and disappointed affection; sometimes, for high and noble sacrifices; but always, under the guidance of a wise and beneficent Providence.

It were vain for man to attempt to answer all the reasons for the wonderful dealings of our Heavenly Father; but when we see these noble women presiding over orphaned households, and cheering the declining days of an aged parent, we have some answer for the mystery.

Go ask the humble cottager, who stood by the death-bed of a beloved companion or child, soothing the last hour and wiping the death-sweat from the brow? Go ask the faithful pastor, who sustains his labors, and comforts him in the hour of trial? Go ask the aged pilgrim, who provided those comfortable garments for those weary limbs? Who taught the little ones their first whispered prayer, and sang to them of Jesus' dying love? Who placed upon the hill-top that little sanctuary whose spire constantly points to heaven? Who rang the first silvery chime of the church-bell, which, Sunday after Sunday, through the shady glen, and over the distant hills, calls the worshippers to the house of God? In the whispered blessings that comes to us from the families of the poor and ignorant in Hazel Glen; in the prayers which, night and morning, ascend from family altars, for their benefactress; in the dependent love of the white-haired father, who leans upon a daughter's arm; in the veneration with which her sisters speak her name, and in the warm love of her orphan nephew and youthful niece, we have some of the reasons why God appointed Edith Clifford to such a holy, heavenly ministry.

Her noonday sun has passed its meridian, and is gradually sinking towards the west. The twilight shadows descend, at first softening, then dimming, the outline of objects, once seen distinctly in the glare of day. The darkness of age slowly draws on, the midnight hour of death is near, and

Edith waits, in faith and patience, for her rest, in another and more glorious home.

When the evening shadows have fled away, the midnight of death rolled off, and the sleep of the grave at an end, then shall dawn the faint harbinger of the glorious morning of immortality.

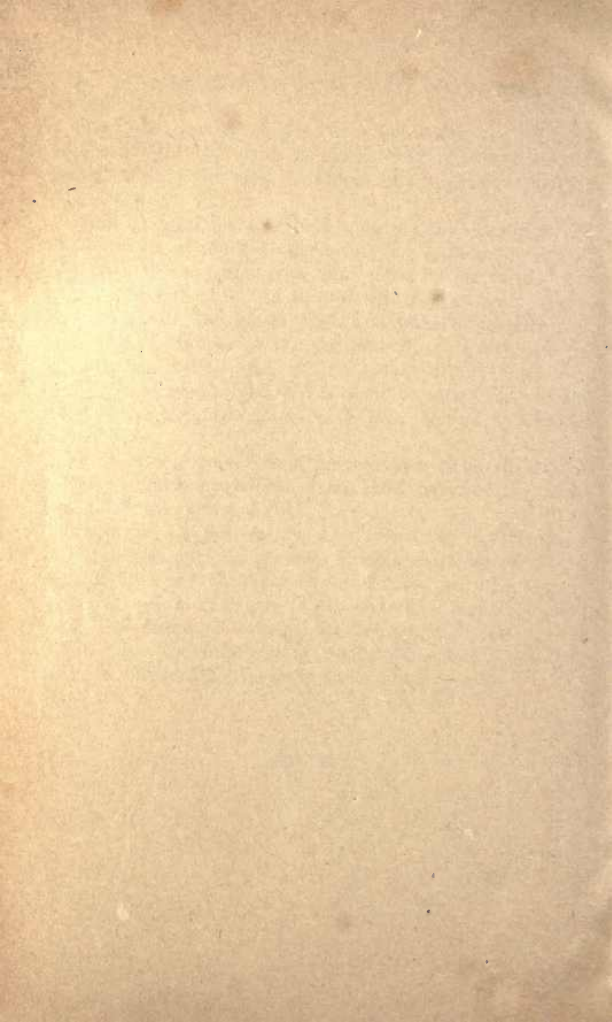
Edith waits for the rosy clouds, tinting the distant portals of the palace of the New Jerusalem, until, under the bright effulgence of an eternal noon, the golden turrets of the everlasting city shall glitter in the full blaze of immortal glory. She sees it with the eye of faith, and waits, in joyful anticipation of that hour, when the wheels of Providence, so intricate and yet so full of eyes, shall all be explained; when the tangled thread of life shall be unwound, and the skill of the Great Architect of human destiny be admired and adorned.

Edith waits in joyful hope, for that hour when, the end of divine discipline accomplished, she shall be presented, faultless, before the throne of God.

She waits for the reaping-time, when she shall present her ripe sheaves to the glorious Husbandman; and with the beloved ones who have crossed the flood, and the pilgrim band who are yet members of the church militant, she shall leave the shades of evening far behind, and bask in the noonday sun of unfading glory; and, waiting thus in faith and patience, Edith Clifford is truly and supremely blest.

THE END.







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